

**Puppet Master:
The Littlest Reich**

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based on a characters and concepts created by Charles Band

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INT. THE FIFTH CLOVERLEAF TAVERN - NIGHT

A peppy pop SONG emanates from a jukebox that is in the corner of The Fifth Cloverleaf Tavern, a place where a dozen CUSTOMERS currently socialize. Standing behind the bar and filling a mug of beer is CANDACE, a buxom woman of twenty-five in a tank top and jeans who has teased brunette hair, happy eyes, and dimples. A lean blonde of a similar vintage who is named NANCY receives the drink and blows a kiss.

The front door opens and reveals the HISSING storm outside. Standing in the entryway is an old, TALL MAN in a long raincoat who has a bowler hat upon his long head, round glasses, and a neat mustache.

CANDACE

It's that old guy again. Soda water with lemon.

Nancy looks at the Tall Man, who then closes the door, collapses his umbrella, and proceeds to the coat rack.

NANCY

Did you let the manager know?

CANDACE

The guy hasn't done anything.

NANCY

That's how it is with creeps...right up until the day that they decide to do something.

Candace watches the Tall Man peel his raincoat from his charcoal gray, pin-striped suit. Leaning over, the oldster removes what look like translucent shower caps from his shiny loafers. These CRINKLING accoutrements he folds up and puts in his metal briefcase.

CANDACE

He's probably harmless.

NANCY

Nobody's harmless. Especially a male nobody.

CANDACE

Not all men are shits.

NANCY

The odds are high--though I guess there was that guy in India.

A HEAVY DUDE who has scraggly hair and a wrestling t-shirt presses through the crowd and puts a plump elbow on the bar.

CANDACE

Another round?

HEAVY DUDE

Two.

Candace flings the taps on two kegs, loads a pair of mugs, and sets them in front of the Heavy Dude, who then places a five on the bar. His eyes flicker to her shadowed cleavage as he takes the beers and turns away. This unsubtle glance is noticed by Nancy, who SNORTS.

CANDACE

Don't get jealous.

NANCY

That was a snort of disdain.

ACCENTED MALE VOICE (O.S.)

May I sit here?

Candace and Nancy look at the speaker, who is the Tall Man. The fellow currently stands at the east corner of the bar.

CANDACE

You're allowed to sit wherever you'd like.

TALL MAN

(French Accent)

I understand that it is permissible. What I am asking is if you would prefer for me to sit somewhere else...?

The bartender gestures amicably.

CANDACE

Please have a seat.

TALL MAN

Thank you.

The oldster smiles and seats himself at the bar. His eyes are hidden behind his foggy spectacles.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)

During my prior visits to this establishment, I noticed you tending bar. Do you enjoy your work?

CANDACE

What would you like to drink?

A small grin flickers upon the face of the Tall Man.

TALL MAN

Soda water with lemon.

Candace turns to the soda dispensers, raises the neckline of her tank top, and fills a mug.

Employing the wall mirror that is behind an array of hard whisky, the bartender rolls her eyes at the blonde, who nods her head in commiseration. Candace sets a lemon on the rim of the drink, which she then carries to the Tall Man, who is donning a pair of black gloves.

CANDACE
That's one dollar.

The bartender sets down the mug, and the oldster reaches into his dark jacket. His eyes fix on those of the woman as he slowly moves his unseen left hand.

CANDACE (CONT'D)
Just settle up later.

TALL MAN
There's no need to delay payment...

The Tall Man withdraws a money clip, which is very thick. From this he pulls off a hundred dollar bill that he then sets upon the table.

CANDACE
Have anything smaller than that?

TALL MAN
I have only bills of this size.

Nancy frowns as Candace takes the hundred from the bar.

CANDACE
I'll get you your change.

The bartender goes to the register and fingers keys. At present, an upbeat SONG begins, and a BLACK COUPLE starts to dance. The Tall Man frowns distastefully at the duo and returns his attention to Candace.

TALL MAN
You did not answer my question.

Counting, the bartender does not look up from the bills.

CANDACE
Which was?

TALL MAN
Do you enjoy working in this establishment?

Candace returns to the Tall Man and sets down his money.

CANDACE
When the customers are respectful,
I do.

TALL MAN
But you have aspirations, do you
not? Beyond The Fifth Cloverleaf?

CANDACE
That's not any of your business.

TALL MAN
Hmm.

With a black-gloved hand, the oldster squeezes some lemon into his soda water.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)
Perhaps I am mistaken--I am from Europe and do not know all of the local customs--but I thought that the primary responsibilities of a bartender were to serve drinks and engage customers in conversation.
(he sips some soda water)
So...is companionship something that you offer...?

Candace glares darkly at the Tall Man, whose eyes are hidden behind his foggy spectacles.

CANDACE
Make another insinuation, and I'll have you thrown out-

The bartender gestures at FAT FRANK, a heap of manliness who sits upon a thick stool by the door.

CANDACE (CONT'D)
And the bouncer won't give you time to put shower caps on your shoes.

The oldster gestures amicably.

TALL MAN
I apologize. I did not mean to offend you.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Bartender?

Candace turns to the speaker and sees a COLLEGE BOY at the far end of the bar. A twenty is in his upraised right hand.

COLLEGE BOY
Another round please.

CANDACE
Coming.

The bartender walks toward the middle of her station and starts pulling mugs. Irked, Nancy leans forward on her stool and faces the Tall Man.

NANCY
So...where're you from in Europe?

TALL MAN
France, originally, but I have
lived in many places.

NANCY
Well...I don't know how things are
back there, but in this country,
people don't wear hats when they
sit down someplace to have a drink.
It just isn't polite.

TALL MAN
You are advising me to remove my
hat?

NANCY
I'm letting you know the customs.
Since you're such a respectful guy.

TALL MAN
Very well.

The Tall Man takes the brim of his bowler in his hands and
removes his hat. Thick, ugly scars cover his bald scalp,
which is uncommonly venous. Indentations that are the size of
golf balls mark the sides of his head.

Nancy shudders at the sight and lowers her gaze.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)
Thank you for enlightening me.

Gently, the Tall Man sets the bowler hat beside his drink.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)
Are you an acquaintance of the
woman who tends the bar?

The blonde swallows her beer and looks at the oldster, whom
she finds repulsive.

NANCY
Let me find out.
(to Candace)
Bartender!

At the far end of the bar, Candace turns around.

NANCY (CONT'D)
The man here wants to know if we're
acquainted.

A knowing grin is shared between the two women as Candace
walks across the floor, stops opposite Nancy, and leans
forward. Their lips press together and open as they kiss. The
bartender's right hand caresses the left cheek of the blonde,
and momentarily, both of them forget their surroundings.
Somewhere in the bar, a dude HOOTS.

Called back to reality, Candace withdraws from Nancy and looks around. The soda water with lemon had been abandoned, and near the front door, the Tall Man pulls shower caps over his shoes and walks toward the exit.

TALL MAN
(muttered)
Disgusting homosexuals.

The door SLAMS. Fat Frank leans to the window and watches the Tall Man's departure.

INT. CANDACE'S BLACK SEDAN - 2AM

Rain CRACKLES on the windshield of the four door red car in which PUNK MUSIC plays. Seated in the driver's seat, Candace takes her hand from the bare thigh of Nancy and dials the steering wheel clockwise. Headlights sweep from the major road to one that is surrounded on either side by woods. Dripping branches reach out from this dense forest.

CANDACE
Mind if I turn it down for a moment?

NANCY
Too loud?

CANDACE
No. I just wanna talk about something.

Concerned, Nancy glances at Candace, who then turns down the punk music until it is inaudible.

NANCY
What's on your mind?

CANDACE
Well...what we talked about last week.

Rain CRACKLES on the windshield; extruding branches tremble.

NANCY
Having a baby?

CANDACE
Yeah. I think...I think that maybe-

Something SNAPS, interrupting Candace, who then glances over her shoulder.

CANDACE (CONT'D)
Did you hear that?

NANCY
Came from the b-

Something SCRAPES. Nancy turns around in her seat and looks in the back of the car. Directly behind the driver, a branch sticks up through a hole in the floor. This limb SCRAPES against the road at fifty miles and hour.

CANDACE
See anything?

NANCY
A branch sticking up through a hole
in the floor.

CANDACE
There's a hole in the floor?
(she looks back)
How the fuck d-

Something POPS and CLANKS. Candace and Nancy face forward. A couple of sparks flicker at the edges of the hood.

CANDACE (CONT'D)
What is g-

There is a CLICK, and the glove compartment opens. Nancy looks at the nook, which is dark. The bulb is dead.

NANCY
Is there some kind of short or
something...?

An unnoticed metal wire loops around the neck of Candace as she drives. Unseen by Nancy, a knife and a hook are raised in the glove compartment.

CANDACE
I'm gonna pull o-

There is a CLANK, and the hood flies open. Unable to see the road, the bartender STOMPS the brakes. Tires SCREECH.

Candace jerks forward. Metal wire slices through her neck. Nancy flies face first at the glove box. Her nose SNAPS; a blade and a hook pierce her eyes.

The bartender's severed head SMASHES the windshield, CLANKS against the raised hood, and flies into the air. Veering, the vehicle CRASHES through underbrush and SLAMS into two trees. Lightning flashes...

INT. STONE MAUSOLEUM - SAME

Thunder RUMBLES outside the windowless stone interior of the mausoleum, which is illuminated purple by egg-shaped gems that are embedded in the wall.

Lying within a stone nook in the north side is the Tall Man. His eyes are closed.

Three insulated cables run from his bald, scarred head and split into branches of five that then connect to fifteen iron rods, which are affixed to the walls of the enclosure. Veins stand out on his face, which is beaded with sweat.

TALL MAN
(whispered in French)
Return hither.

The oldster nods his head.

TALL MAN (CONT'D)
(whispered in French)
Stay in the shadows and avoid the roads.

For a moment, the Tall Man focuses his thoughts. Veins pulsate upon his face, and CRACKLING STATIC that sounds like the space between radio stations echoes in the mausoleum. The iron rods in the wall vibrate and HUM an eerie pitch...

INT. STONE MAUSOLEUM - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Static CRACKLES and the vibrating iron rods HUM. Sweat drips from the strained face of the recumbent Tall Man.

TALL MAN
(whispered in French)
Await me in the basement.

A moment later, the Tall Man EXHALES loudly and relaxes. The CRACKLING static and the HUMMING rods go silent. Only the rain outside can be heard.

With long, knobby fingers the oldster pulls a cable from his scarified skull. A three-inch red needle silently slides from his perforated brain. The egg-shaped purple lights in the wall dim. This process is repeated twice more, until the oldster is no longer wired to the rods. The gems go dark.

The Tall Man slides to the edge of the nook, sets his feet on the ground, and walks to the corner. There, he pulls a lever. A heavy stone THUNKS into place, sealing up and hiding the control nook.

The Tall Man turns and proceeds to the mausoleum door, which he then opens. On the far side of myriad moonlit raindrops stands an enormous Gothic mansion...

EXT. ROAD SURROUNDED BY WOODS - 2:37AM

Lights whirl atop two 'Postville Police Department' cars and turn falling raindrops into red and blue gems. Three police officers in ponchos who wield waterproof flashlights walk down a declining slope to survey the black sedan, which lies sixty feet below the road. OFFICER CAROL DORESKI and a MUSTACHED CORPORAL follow their SERGEANT toward the wreck. A branch SNAPS, and the man in the lead stumbles.

SERGEANT
Son of a biscuit.

The young policewoman pans her light.

OFFICER CAROL DORESKEI
Sergeant, are you o-

The woman sees something that causes her to stop talking. At present, the other cops turn around. Illuminated by the beam of the raised flashlight, twenty-five feet off of the ground, and wedged between two tree branches is the severed head of Candace. Rain TAPS upon her staring eyeballs, collects in her mouth, and drains from her exposed esophagus.

The Mustached Corporal gags, and the Sergeant pales. Officer Carol Doeski shines her light on the wreck, wherein sit the headless driver and the mutilated passenger.

OFFICER CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
Either of you recognize these girls?

MUSTACHED OFFICER
The one in the tree works as bartender at The Fifth Cloverleaf. Worked, I mean.

SERGEANT
Have Jay call and see if anybody's still over there.

MUSTACHED OFFICER
Will do.

The Mustached Officer eagerly turns from the gruesome tableau and walks toward one of the patrol cars, wherein sits a BLACK POLICEMAN who is talking on a radio.

OFFICER CAROL DORESKEI
I'll do the verification.

Grimly, Officer Carol Doeski walks to the far side of the vehicle and checks the pulse of the unmoving blonde, whose face is a collection of stab wounds.

OFFICER CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
She's cold.

Turning, the policewoman eyes the rear passenger door, which is wide open. She lowers the beam of her flashlight and sees a bunch of small indentations in the mud. At present, the senior cop arrives and sees the tracks.

SERGEANT
What the heck kind of animal made these?

OFFICER CAROL DORESKEI
Don't know. Let me look...

Officer Carol Doeski follows the tracks to the edge of the woods. There, she stops and tilts her flashlight. The beam glares in scores of little puddles that resemble footprints.

OFFICER CAROL DOESKI (CONT'D)
Seem like a few different kinds.
(she leans closer)
Some that look two legged.

SERGEANT
Did somebody's pet monkey escape?
(he thinks)
Or maybe it was a raccoon--like
they do when they're begging for
scraps?

HISSING rain continues to erode the weird tracks.

INT. THE FIFTH CLOVERLEAF - SAME

A RINGING telephone echoes in the emptied bar. GRUMBLING, Fat Frank sets an overturned chair on a table, walks across the wood, and seizes the receiver.

FAT FRANK
Yeah?
(he listens)
I do.
(he listens)
Really...? Fuck, man...that's
terrible, I can't b-
(he listens)
Earlier tonight?
(he thinks for a moment)
Yeah...there was an old guy who
came in and bothered her--a weirdo.
(he listens)
Yeah, I watched him get in his car
and drive off to make sure he
didn't hang around or nothing.
Wrote down his license number, just
in case.

INT. OFFICER CAROL DOESKI'S PATROL CAR - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Three hours later, Officer Carol Doeski drives her patrol car along a wooded road. Sitting in the passenger seat is her PARTNER, a Hispanic fellow of thirty who slots shells into his pump-action shotgun. The policewoman glances at the rearview mirror and sees two other cruisers. At present, she dials the steering wheel counterclockwise, corners onto an open road, and looks to her left.

A stone wall that has iron spikes circumscribes a twenty acre lot in the middle of which stands a dark, three-story mansion. No lights are on inside of this ominous edifice.

A small black something scurries across the top of the wall and leaps into the weeds.

PARTNER
What the fuck was that?

Officer Carol Doeski exchanges a look with her Partner, who slots a final round into his pump-action shotgun.

OFFICER CAROL DORESKI
Be ready for...something different.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE PROPERTY OF THE THREE STORY MANSION - DAWN

Rain HISSSES upon the spiked wall that surrounds the property. The iron gate has been forced open, and half a mile from the road, all three patrol cars are parked in front of the dark mansion. At present, a door CREAKS, and a man YELLS.

MUSTACHED OFFICER (O.S.)
What the fuck is th-

A shotgun BOOMS, and BOOMS again. A woman SCREAMS.

OFFICER CAROL DORESKI (O.S.)
Get away from that right now or-

A pistol BANGS, BANGS again, and BANGS a third time, and a woman SHRIEKS.

Cut to Black.

Titlecard: Twenty-Nine Years Later in Portland...

EXT. OFF-WHITE TWO-STORY HOUSE - MORNING

A blue sedan that is loaded with boxes draws to the curb in front of a neat, off-white house, which is one of many on this suburban street. Sitting behind the wheel of this vehicle is EDGAR EASTON, a tall and unshaven thirty-two-year-old man who has dirty blond hair and glassy eyes. He looks at the nearby home and SIGHS.

The lanky fellow flings the gear, yanks his keys, grabs two suitcases, exits the car, and traverses the front walkway. At the front door, he sets down his luggage and KNOCKS.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
It's open.

INT. LIVING ROOM / EASTON HOUSE - SAME

The lanky fellow opens the door and walks through the small foyer into a neat living room, which has a plush couch, matching chairs, and elaborate curtains.

EDGAR
Where are you?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN / EASTON HOUSE - SAME

Edgar enters a large, green marble kitchen, where sits his athletic, fifty-six-year-old father TOM EASTON, who has rolled up sleeves on his hard arms and a horseshoe of hair on his leathery head. Held in his rough hands is a newspaper.

EDGAR
G'morning.

The father looks up from an article and appraises his son.

TOM EASTON
Letting yourself go?

EDGAR
Huh?

TOM EASTON
That stain on your face.

EDGAR
I'm growing a beard. Going for a new look.

Tom Easton SNORTS and returns his gaze to the newspaper.

TOM EASTON
Then you might wanna remove that jewelry you've got on. It's dated.

EDGAR
What're you tal-

Edgar stops himself short and looks at his left hand. Upon his ring finger is a gold band. He removes this marital token and shoves it in his blue jeans.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
Don't even remember putting it on.

No response comes from Tom Easton, who turns the page of his newspaper and continues reading.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Eddy!

Edgar looks toward the entryway and sees his mother, SUZANNE EASTON, a tall, upbeat, and very fit woman in her fifties who wears orange gym clothes and white sneakers.

EDGAR
Mom.

Suzanne Easton traverses the green tiles, hugs Edgar, and steps back for an appraisal.

SUZANNE EASTON
How are you?

EDGAR
Fine.

SUZANNE EASTON
That's good. You look well.

EDGAR
Thanks.

TOM EASTON
Don't patronize him.

The mother frowns at the father.

SUZANNE EASTON
I'm not. A divorce is very hard on
a person, and I think that he looks
very well. Especially when
considering.

Edgar wrinkles his mouth at this defense, and Suzanne Easton
faces him once again.

SUZANNE EASTON (CONT'D)
I cleaned up your old room for you.
Any idea how long you intend to
stay?

EDGAR
I'm looking at some apartments this
weekend, when I'm off of work.
Shouldn't be for too long.

TOM EASTON
I'd like that in writing.

EDGAR
Aren't you just a fountain of
optimism?

INT. STAIRS / EASTON HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The lanky fellow carries his suitcase up the carpeted, off-
white stairwell. Photos decorate the wall, and one of them
garners his attention. In this picture, Tom and Suzanne
Easton are fifteen years younger and stand behind two smiling
boys--a seventeen-year-old Edgar and a similar-looking youth
who is a little younger and dressed in an orange-and-white
baseball uniform.

INT. EDGAR'S BEDROOM / EASTON HOUSE - SAME

Edgar carries his suitcases through the doorway into a light blue room that has a twin mattress, a window that faces the backyard, a drawing table, posters of comic book superheroes, and shelves that are filled with action figures.

INT. EDGAR'S BEDROOM / EASTON HOUSE - LATER

Half an hour later, the lanky fellow sets a cardboard box atop the eight others that he has carried up to his childhood room. He stretches his arms and looks around the familiar space. Upon the drawing table is a framed photograph of Edgar and his younger brother, James. Some bittersweet memories surface, and give the lanky fellow an idea.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALL / EASTON HOUSE - SAME

Edgar exits his room and looks at the closed door that is on the other side of the hallway. He deliberates for a moment and then walks forward. Gripping the metal knob, he twists his hand and opens the door.

INT. JAMES'S BEDROOM / EASTON HOUSE - SAME

The lanky fellow walks into the bedroom. A framed picture of his brother's smiling face is on the far wall, and below this image is a flower-filled vase that reads 'In Memory of James W. Easton.' Trophies, two baseball gloves, and a cracked bat sit on wood shelves.

A thought occurs to Edgar, and he walks to the closet door, which he then opens. Hanging up and wrapped in plastic are several baseball uniforms and a suit that looks new. Sitting below these items are three large cardboard boxes. Written in marker on the top one is 'Books,' written on the middle one is 'Clothes,' and written on the bottom one is 'Toys.'

Edgar puts his shoulder against the middle and top box and withdraws the lowermost one from the closet. This container he then sets upon the twin bed and opens. From the box he withdraws a large, neon green, pump-action squirt gun. A bittersweet smile plays upon his face as he handles the toy weapon and sets it upon the bed.

From the box Edgar withdraws a twelve-inch tall puppet that has a skull for a head, opalescent hair, a black trench coat, a matching wide-brimmed hat, and two long white hands.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Feeling sorry for yourself?

Startled, Edgar faces the doorway, where stands Tom Easton.

TOM EASTON
Coming in here--going through his
things. Wallowing.

EDGAR
I'm reminiscing, not 'wallowing.' A lot of times I come over, I look at James's stuff.

The father SNORTS.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
When was the last time you set foot in this room? Or even said his name?

TOM EASTON
Those're implications you're making?

EDGAR
It might do you some good to think about things sometimes. Acknowledge and accept them.

TOM EASTON
Are you about to tell me you turned into a fag?

EDGAR
Enough, Dad. If you don't want me to stay here, say so. Mom invited me, but you've been at your worst since the moment I arrived. And your best isn't wonderful.

TOM EASTON
Your lecture would've had more of an impact if you weren't holding a doll in your hands.

Edgar sets the skull-headed puppet atop the squirt gun.

EDGAR
I can stay with Markowitz if you're gonna act like an-

TOM EASTON
No, no. Your mom wants you here, and it's fine by me.

The lanky fellow eyes his father directly for a long moment.

EDGAR
Okay.

Tom Easton gestures at the box of toys.

TOM EASTON
Is any of that stuff valuable? Your mom and I are have out everything we want to remember him by, and that box's just been sitting in the closet forever.

Edgar glances at the skull-headed puppet, the squirt gun, and the inside of the box, which contains a foam sword, a stuffed bear, and a couple of orange plastic trucks.

EDGAR
I don't think so.

TOM EASTON
Well if you wanna sell it on the computer, keep the cash.

EDGAR
Thanks, though I'm not sure I'd want to sell any of his stuff.

TOM EASTON
Up to you. If you're back by seven, have dinner with us. If not, we'll set some aside for you.

EDGAR
Thanks.

The father turns away, walks up the hall, and stops.

TOM EASTON
I was real disappointed when I heard that you and Jennifer split up. I thought she would make a good mother, and she was a real looker--especially for a guy who works in a comic book store and draws.

EDGAR
I'm sure that was supposed to sound nicer.

Tom Easton departs, and Edgar returns his attention to the skull-headed puppet that lies upon the bed. Deep within its black eyes sockets, something glimmers. The lanky fellow then notices a letter within the trench coat collar and rolls back the fabric. The name 'Blade' is sewn into the cloth.

INT. FISTICUFFS COMICS - AFTERNOON

Sunlight illuminates the superhero statues that inhabit the display window of a comic shop. A PALE TEEN customer looks through long boxes while on the corner couch, a short, bald man of thirty-eight who is named MARKOWITZ eats a falafel pita from a takeout container. At present, the young customer walks toward the counter, behind which sits Edgar. The lanky fellow reaches under the table, pulls out four comics, and riffles them quickly.

EDGAR
It'll be twelve.

The Teen opens his wallet, withdraws a five, and starts counting through ones until he reaches JINGLING change.

PALE TEEN
I've got nine eighty-five. Can you-

MARKOWITZ
No charity. If you don't have
enough, you've gotta steal from
your mommy like everybody else.

PALE TEEN
(to Markowitz)
You're a jerk off.

MARKOWITZ
Perhaps, though that does not
diminish the value of my advice.

The Pale Teen removes one of the comic books.

EDGAR
Want me to hold it for next time or
put it back on the racks?

PALE TEEN
Hold it. You drawing anything new
these days?

EDGAR
Not right now.

PALE TEEN
You should do more Lightning Girl.

EDGAR
Maybe.

PALE TEEN
She was hot.

Preoccupied, Edgar nods his head, places three comics in a bag, and takes the money from Pale Teen, who then leaves. Markowitz finishes his falafel and approaches the counter.

MARKOWITZ
You've got any new ideas?

EDGAR
Not since the divorce.

MARKOWITZ
You really should do something.

EDGAR
I will. I'm just...distracted these
days.

Guiltily, the shop owner runs a hand over his head and SIGHS.

MARKOWITZ

Well...I'm sorry to tell you this right now...but I'm gonna have to cut down your hours.

The lanky fellow is surprised.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

I was hoping you'd have some new book going before I did this... but...well...things're tight.

EDGAR

That's disappointing, but I completely understand.

MARKOWITZ

Sorry, man. Maybe it'll motivate you to draw something new...?

EDGAR

Maybe.

Markowitz pats an unconvinced Edgar on the right shoulder.

MARKOWITZ

You gonna be okay? Financially?

EDGAR

That's not something for you to worry about. We're friends, but you're my boss too and this is business. Things're tight for everyone.

The shop owner forces a grin and departs. Thinking about money, the lanky fellow turns to his computer, RATTLES some keys with his fingertips, and goes to a search engine. He moves the mouse and stabs a box with a cursor arrow.

Into this opening, he types, 'Blade,' 'puppet,' 'skull,' and 'trench coat.' He then CLICKS a button. Upon the screen is written, 'Approximately 4,500 Search Results in 0.3 Seconds.'

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Why do search engines tell you how fast they are?

MARKOWITZ

They're egomaniacs.

The lanky fellow looks at the first result, which reads, 'Puppet Auction in Postville, Oregon on the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Toulon Murders.'

Edgar wrinkles his brow and selects the link. Twirling arrows chase each other as the article loads. Appearing on the screen is a picture of the dark, three-story mansion where almost thirty years ago, the police force of Postville converged for a deadly encounter.

The lanky fellow scrolls down and stops on the image of a puppet that has a German kaiser helmet, slits for eyes, bullets for teeth, and a missing left arm. Below this photo is written, 'This 'Kaisier' (see above) is one of many puppets that will be sold at the upcoming auction. Bids on this item will start at \$3,500.'

EDGAR

Wow.

Below this image is a Blade puppet, which has a cracked skull and a missing arm. Edgar scrolls to the top and reads...

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE EASTON HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

The blue sedan sidles to the curb in front of the off-white house, and the lanky fellow flings the gear into park. He glances at the clock on the dashboard, which shows that it is nine minutes after seven. His eyes flicker to the small window beyond which his mother and father eat dinner.

Uninterested in socializing, Edgar reaches into a slim paper bag that is resting on the passenger seat, withdraws a Lightning Girl comic book, and looks at the first page. 'Issue #1 October 2011. Written, pencilled, and inked by Edgar Easton. This book is dedicated with love to my supportive wife, Jennifer Easton.'

Edgar turns the page and looks at the pretty face of the superheroine. Bittersweet memories come to the lanky fellow.

A fist KNOCKS on the window, startling Edgar, who then turns his head. On the other side of the glass stands an athletic TOMBOY of twenty-six who has short brunette hair, dimples, a sporty tank top, and a cut-off jeans. Her right hand is hidden behind her back.

TOMBOY

Eddy Easton?

Confused, the lanky fellow nods his head, sets down the comic book, and opens his window.

EDGAR

Yes?

TOMBOY

Do you remember me?

EDGAR

You...seem kinda familiar, but...

TOMBOY

I'm Ashley.

Brow furrowed, Edgar tries to recall somebody by this name. Suddenly, he does.

EDGAR
Mike's sister?

ASHLEY
You remember.
(she smiles)
I know I looked different before.

The lanky fellow points to the beige house that sits at the far corner of the block.

EDGAR
You're still over there?

ASHLEY
Yeah, though it's just me now.
Mike's in the Coast Guard, and my
parents went to Florida.
(she glances at the comic)
Am I interrupting you?

EDGAR
No--I'm just re-reading this. Work
wasn't great, and I don't feel like
dinner with my parents right now.

ASHLEY
Wanna join us for a walk aroun-

Ashley teeters and pulls on a cord with her right hand.
Something HISSES. Edgar leans out and sees an irate Persian
cat that is harnessed to the leash.

EDGAR
You're walking a cat?

ASHLEY
Hypothetically.

The lanky fellow exits his car and faces the tomboy. For a
brief moment, they appraise each other.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I didn't remember you being so
tall.

EDGAR
I didn't remember you being
so...not a kid.

ASHLEY
A six year difference is like
twenty when you're in grade school,
but now...

EDGAR
Yeah, I know.

There is an awkward moment where the lanky fellow and the
tomboy look away and try to think of something to say.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
So what's her name?

ASHLEY
Rhonda. Could you actually tell
she's a woman?

EDGAR
The manicure gave it away.

Rhonda lunges to her paws and bounds forward, trailing Ashley, who is followed by Edgar. The animal leads the humans past a mailbox and continues until she reaches a collection of garbage cans. Against corrugated metal, the feline rubs the side of her face.

ASHLEY
She loves these garbage cans.

EDGAR
Who doesn't?

ASHLEY
You're an artist, right?

EDGAR
By some definitions. I draw comic
books and work in a comic shop.

ASHLEY
That makes sense. I remember when
you hung out with Mike, you drew
pictures that were better than his
and everybody else's.

EDGAR
Thanks. And thanks for not saying,
'Ewww' or throwing rocks at me
after I said comic books.

ASHLEY
I've only read a few, but I can
appreciate the skills that it takes
to make them.

EDGAR
What do you do these days?

ASHLEY
Getting a sociology degree and
working in a record shop.

EDGAR
I like records. Though old ones
that first came out that way, not
the new ones that hipster jerkwads
make to be retro.

ASHLEY

Yeah. But honestly, I'd probably agree with any statement that contained the phrase 'hipster jerkwads'.

Edgar grins, and a pregnant silence expands between him and Ashley. Two lights come on outside a nearby house and sparkle in the eyes of the tomboy. Decided, the lanky fellow clears his throat.

EDGAR

Will Rhonda get jealous if I ask you for you number?

ASHLEY

She might, but she can deal.

Annoyed, Rhonda turns her head.

INT. EDGAR'S BEDROOM / EASTON HOUSE - LATER

Sitting on his bed in boxer shorts and a t-shirt, Edgar looks at his cell phone, which shows the number of Ashley Summers. A tiny smile comes to his face as he thinks of his childhood friend's grown up sister and switches off the device.

At present, the lanky fellow picks up the Lightning Girl comic, regards it for a moment, and sets it upon a shelf. His gaze falls on the closed door that is across the hall.

INT. JAMES'S BEDROOM / OFF-WHITE HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The door opens as Edgar walks into James's unlighted bedroom and looks at the closet. With his right hand, he flips a switch, which CLICKS. A standing lamp illuminates the picture of the deceased brother, the vase, and the rest of the space.

The lanky fellow pads across the carpet, opens the closet door, and withdraws the weird puppet from the box of toys. This limp body he carries over to the lamp and holds toward the fixture. Light glints upon the skull, opalescent hair, and dangling white hands of Blade. Again, something glimmers within its deep, dark eye sockets.

The lanky fellow unfastens the puppet's trench coat and pulls aside its lapels. Underneath this outerwear lies a stuffed body that is made out of pure black fabric. Within this soft material is a hard skeletal armature.

Edgar turns Blade onto its stomach and raises its trench coat. A horizontal slit lies in the fabric above its waist. Into this opening, the lanky fellow slides his right hand.

Edgar raises Blade and looks directly into its white face.

EDGAR

Bonjour.

The lanky fellow swings the puppet's dangling arms back and forth. Something CLICKS, and a three inch knife springs from the puppet's right hand like a stiletto.

Startled, Edgar drops Blade. The dense ceramic skull THUDS upon the floor, and the hand with the knife bounces.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Shit.

SUZANNE EASTON (O.S.)

Edgar?

EDGAR

Yeah. Just dropped something.
Sorry.

TOM EASTON (O.S.)

Try to keep it down--we're watching
the game.

EDGAR

I will.

The lanky fellow picks up the puppet and looks at the bright, metal weapon that juts from its dangling right hand.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

You definitely seem like a toy that
a maniac would make.

No response comes from Blade. Edgar withdraws a receipt, which he then impales upon the stiletto and pulls to the right. The sharp edge slices cleanly through the paper.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Like a scalpel.

The lanky fellow pockets the paper, reaches under the puppet's trench coat, and slides his hand into the slit.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Do you want to go to the auction?

Edgar makes Blade nod its head 'yes.'

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Bidding starts at-

Something CLICKS and SNAPS. The puppet's left hand splits in half, and from this opening springs a bright metal hook.

Uneasy, Edgar appraises this second secret weapon. With his left index finger, he touches the tip of the hook.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Jesus crap.

The lanky fellow withdraws his pricked finger, sucks a drop of blood, and adjusts his right hand, which is still inside of the puppet. Something CLACKS and CLACKS again.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
This must be it-

A gear CLACKS, CLACKS, CLACKS as the knife slowly retracts into Blade's right hand. Another gear CLACKS, CLACKS, CLACKS as the metal hook withdraws into the puppet's left arm. The halves of the split-apart hand then close together. None of the hidden weapons are currently visible.

Warily, Edgar appraises Blade once more. Something glimmers deep within its black eye sockets.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
What's in there?

The lanky fellow pokes his left index finger into the puppet's right eye socket.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
Maybe this isn't smart.

Edgar removes the digit from Blade.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
Wanna go on road trip next month?

No response comes from the puppet's ceramic skull. Edgar walks to the closet, places Blade inside of the toy box, and shuts the door.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
Don't stab or hook anything.

The lanky fellow walks across the room, turns off the light, and exits. Hinges SQUEAK as the door shuts. Within the closed closet, something CLICKS.

INT. KITCHEN / EASTON HOUSE - MORNING

It is morning. Bright sunlight pours through the window into the immaculate kitchen. Suzanne Easton and a clean-shaven Edgar sit at the table while Tom Easton cooks two omelettes.

TOM EASTON
Scallion and cream cheese good?

EDGAR
Yeah. Thanks.

The lanky fellow sips his coffee and looks at his mother, who is drinking grapefruit juice.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
So I've always wanted to ask... You
married him for the omelettes,
right?

SUZANNE EASTON
I'd be lying if I said they weren't
a factor.

Edgar takes another sip and suddenly recalls something.

EDGAR
Do either of you remember where you
got James's puppet?

TOM EASTON
The one you were fiddling with last
month?

EDGAR
Yeah. The creepy one with the skull
and the trench coat.

TOM EASTON
I don't.
(to his wife)
Do you?

SUZANNE EASTON
We didn't actually buy it for James-
he found it at sleepaway camp. I
wouldn't've bought him something
like that, but he really wanted to
keep it, so we let him.

EDGAR
Where was his sleepaway at?

SUZANNE EASTON
Postville.

EDGAR
Makes sense.

TOM EASTON
Come get yours and your mom's.

Edgar walks over to the counter and takes the two plates.

EDGAR
Thanks.

TOM EASTON
Is it worth something? The doll?

EDGAR
I think so. Maybe enough to cover
the deposit for that place I saw
last weekend.

(MORE)

EDGAR (CONT'D)
(he sets the plates down)
Maybe even more than that.

INT. FISTICUFFS COMICS - TWILIGHT

The twilight sun shines upon the superhero statues that are in the window of the shop. At the counter, Edgar looks at an Oregon State road map while on the couch, Markowitz reads a comic book and drinks a Japanese soda.

EDGAR
Do you think the turnpike's the
best way?

The recumbent shop owner turns a page.

MARKOWITZ
It was better before he could fly.
Back when he leapt over things.

EDGAR
Why's that?

MARKOWITZ
Jumping hundreds of feet in the air
makes sense--and is a legitimate
extrapolation of superhuman
strength--whereas flying
demonstrates a flagrant disregard
of physics...unless you propose
that his body is magnetically
opposed to the Earth or
magnetically attracted to the sun.
(he SNORTS)
And really, he's just too powerful
if he can fly.

EDGAR
Isn't he bulletproof?

MARKOWITZ
Bullet resistant.

The door opens, and in walks Ashley, wearing a backpack and a big smile. Surprised by the new arrival, Edgar waves.

EDGAR
Hey there.

ASHLEY
Hi.

On the couch, Markowitz sits up, turns his head, and appraises Ashley in somewhat lingering manner.

MARKOWITZ
You must be Ashley?

ASHLEY
I am. You're Markowitz?

MARKOWITZ
Are you impressed?

EDGAR
Don't answer that.

The tomboy walks over to the lanky fellow, kisses him on the mouth, and withdraws.

ASHLEY
We closed the shop early, so I decided to come by and see where you worked. I hope it's okay.

EDGAR
Of course. As you can see, this place is quite thrilling.

MARKOWITZ
Show some pride.

Ashley glances at the road map that lies upon the table.

ASHLEY
Going somewhere?

EDGAR
I'm still thinking about that convention at the end of the month.

ASHLEY
The one in Postville?

EDGAR
Yeah.

An unspoken question sits upon the face of the tomboy.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
Would you wanna go?

ASHLEY
To a convention celebrating a bunch of sick murders that happened thirty years ago?
(she shakes her head)
Things like that exemplify absolutely everything that's wrong with our society.

EDGAR
That's a yes?

ASHLEY
Yep.

Markowitz COUGHS, COUGHS again, and COUGHS a third time.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

You okay?

MARKOWITZ

Yeah. I just get this weird cough when I'm not invited to things.

Alarm shows upon the face of the lanky fellow.

ASHLEY

You wanna go to the convention?

MARKOWITZ

I'd love to join you two. Thanks f-

EDGAR

I don't mean to contradict this fine woman, but that was a wholly unauthorized invitation.

MARKOWITZ

Really? You're gonna un-invite me? Your close friend and very tolerant employer?

(he scratches his rump)

I'm a treasure.

EDGAR

If you wanna come with us, you're gonna have to follow some rules. No eating in the car.

MARKOWITZ

That's inhuman.

EDGAR

No drinking in the car, no smoking in the car. No thrash metal, death metal or black metal in the car.

MARKOWITZ

How about-

EDGAR

No grindcore in the car.

The shop owner looks at the tomboy.

MARKOWITZ

Are you're okay with all these restrictions? Because I-

EDGAR

No giving numerical ratings to the women that you see from the car. No describing imaginary sexual encounters with the women that you see from the car.

MARKOWITZ

Wait, wait, wait a minute, I-

EDGAR

And you're paying for gas.

MARKOWITZ

Hold it right there, Genghis McHitler. You're giving me all these restrictions and asking me to pay for gas too?

EDGAR

Those are my terms. Still interested in coming?

MARKOWITZ

I am. Though now, just to spite you.

Edgar grimaces, and Markowitz looks at Ashley, who seems slightly worried.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

Don't worry, Butterlumps--I'm totally harmless.

EDGAR

No nicknames for Ashley.

The shop owner SIGHS, raises a remote control, and fingers a button. GROWLING DEATH METAL MUSIC fills the store. Markowitz looks at Ashley.

MARKOWITZ

Do you happen to know another seven and a half?

The tomboy grimaces.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

I'll accept a seven. Or a very skilled six.

DEATH METAL MUSIC ROARS.

INT. EDGAR'S BLUE SEDAN - MORNING

SEVENTIES SOUL MUSIC fills the blue sedan that is being driven along an interstate ramp by Edgar, who currently wears brown corduroys and a Fisticuffs Comics t-shirt. Sitting in the passenger seat in ripped cutoffs and a tank top is Ashley, who has a bag of trail mix in her lap, and recumbent on the bench in the rear of the vehicle is Markowitz, who wears plaid pajamas and rests his head upon a plush pillow.

MARKOWITZ

Driver. What're you gonna start the bidding at?

EDGAR

Not sure. It's in better condition than most of the others I saw listed, and the opening bids for those were three and four thousand. So maybe five or six.

MARKOWITZ

Very well, Driver. Carry on.

The lanky fellow steers onto the interstate and passes a slow station wagon as the tomboy CRUNCHES upon some trail mix.

ASHLEY

It was you brother's, right? The puppet?

EDGAR

Yeah--he found it at sleepaway camp the summer before his accident.

ASHLEY

I remember hearing about that back then. Something happened to his bike, right?

EDGAR

Yeah. His brakes got cut somehow.

Ashley looks at Edgar, whose gaze is on the road, but also a bit distant.

ASHLEY

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bring up anything sad.

EDGAR

Don't worry about it. We're selling one of James's toys--he's an unavoidable topic of conversation.

MARKOWITZ

Grindcore would help you avoid this topic. As would toplessness.

ASHLEY

But you're only an A-cup.

The tomboy twists around and looks into the backseat.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Maybe a B.

Defensively, Markowitz crosses his arms over his chest.

MARKOWITZ

Be polite to you boyfriend's boss, Sugarbat.

EDGAR
What'd I say about nicknames?

A sign that reads 'SLOW DOWN -- CONSTRUCTION AHEAD' appears on the right hand side of the interstate. Edgar applies the brakes as he nears the rough pavement.

INT. TRUNK / EDGAR'S BLUE SEDAN - SAME

Inside the trunk, a shoebox is wedged between two suitcases. Tires RUMBLE upon the rough road, and everything shakes.

INT. SHOEBOX / TRUNK / EDGAR'S BLUE SEDAN - SAME

Lying within the shoebox and enshrouded in bubble wrap is Blade. The RUMBLING vehicle shakes the puppet. Something CLICKS, and a single plastic bubble POPS.

EXT. GAS STATION - NOON

Dark clouds cover the sky, and a chill wind WHISTLES. Edgar stretches his arms while Markowitz pumps gas into the rump of the blue sedan, which is parked at a self-serve island. From the minimart walks Ashley, carrying a bag of granola and two liters of diet soda.

MARKOWITZ
How come she gets to drink and eat
stuff in the car and I don't?

EDGAR
I'm one hundred percent certain
that question was rhetorical.

The tomboy arrives and gives a soda to the lanky fellow.

ASHLEY
Can you pop the trunk? It's getting
chilly, and I wanna grab my
sweater.

Edgar reaches into the car and fingers the release. The latch disengages with a CLUNK as Ashley walks to the back of the vehicle. There, she raises the trunk.

Diffused daylight shines upon the luggage and the shoebox. Ashley glances at the cardboard container within which lies Blade, reaches out, and UNZIPS the suitcase on the right.

INT. EDGAR'S BLUE SEDAN - LATE DAY

The sun skulks behind the dark clouds of the western horizon. JAZZ MUSIC plays at a low volume in the blue sedan, where Edgar YAWNS while driving along the interstate. Asleep in the reclining passenger seat is Ashley, and unconscious behind her is the supine form of Markowitz.

A sign that reads 'Postville Next Exit' appears on the right, and the lanky fellow notches the turn signal. The JAZZ MUSIC reprises the head and comes to a conclusion as he navigates the sharp curve of the off ramp.

The song ends, and Edgar brakes at a stop sign. Quiet fills the blue sedan as the lanky fellow reaches for his coffee.

A dim, muted POP sounds from somewhere. Disregarding the quiet noise, Edgar picks up his coffee and sips. Again, something POPS. This is followed by another louder POP.

The lanky fellow looks toward the backseat, where lies the sleeping shop owner. Silence fills the car as Edgar waits for a reprise of the noises. Nothing is audible.

The lanky fellow sips his coffee and faces forward. Something POPS, POPS again, and POPS a third time. Edgar turns around.

EDGAR
(whispered)
Markowitz.

MARKOWITZ
Mm.

EDGAR
You hear that sound?

MARKOWITZ
What?

EDGAR
A popping noise. Listen.

A car HONKS, startling Edgar, who then notices a silver luxury car in the rearview mirror.

MARKOWITZ
Sounds more like a car horn.

The lanky fellow starts to accelerate. Something HONKS on the right. Edgar sees a RUMBLING blur and STOMPS his brakes.

Two motorcycles WHIZZ past the car. Both BIKERS are short-haired, broad-shouldered women.

EXT. PARKING LOT / POSTVILLE LODGE - TWILIGHT

The blue sedan pulls into the Postville Lodge parking lot, where many of the one hundred and fifty available spaces are occupied by a mixed collection of cars, vans, trucks, and motorcycles. Edgar looks for vacancies and drives into an opening that is perhaps the farthest one from the brown, four-story hotel. A raindrop SPLATS upon the windshield.

The lanky fellow flings the gear into park, and the blue sedan's taillights darken. He pulls the release latch, and the trunk lock disengages, CLUNK.

Three doors open, and soon, Edgar, Ashley, and Markowitz emerge from the car and stretch their limbs. Toward the back of the blue sedan, the trio from Portland proceeds.

Edgar raises the trunk and wrinkles his brow at what he sees. A knife point is sticking out of the shoebox that contains the Blade puppet.

MARKOWITZ

I thought you wrapped that thing up.

EDGAR

I did.

A raindrop SPLATS upon the head of the lanky fellow, who then withdraws the shoebox and turns it over in his hands. His brow wrinkles in confusion. Upon the bottom of the container are three more knife holes.

MARKOWITZ

Were you scared he might suffocate?

EDGAR

I didn't make these.

Edgar sets the shoebox upon his suitcase, removes the tabs of tape from the sides, and lifts the top. Within a bed of torn and deflated bubble wrap lies Blade, whose stiletto-mounted right hand is stuck in the cardboard lid. The lanky fellow detaches the weapon, and the slack arm falls. Its knife CLINKS upon the hook, which is also exposed.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

His weapons must've gotten triggered during the drive.

ASHLEY

What're those?

Edgar looks at Ashley, who is pointing to a part of the lid that is a few inches above the knife slit. Three pairs of pinholes dot this part of the cardboard surface.

A raindrop SPLATS upon the ceramic skull of the puppet. Edgar covers Blade and grabs both suitcases.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

I can carry mine. I packed a lot o-

EDGAR

Nope. I'm carrying your bag.

The tomboy kisses the lanky fellow and takes the shoebox while the shop owner grabs his plump backpack. Rain SPLATS on vehicles and scalps as Edgar closes the trunk, which THUDS.

INT. LOBBY / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

The automated doors slide apart as the trio from Portland enters the lobby, a light brown room that has four chandeliers, dark green carpet, and an oaken reception desk, behind which sits HOWIE, a petite blond fellow of forty who has bright blue eyes and a suit that matches the rug.

HOWIE

Welcome to the Postville Lodge.

Edgar, Ashley, and Markowitz walk toward the reception desk and pass a sign that reads, 'Proud Host of the Toulon Murders 30th Anniversary Convention.'

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Are you here for the convention?

EDGAR

We are.

HOWIE

That's just wonderful. What names are your reservations under?

EDGAR

One's under Easton, the other's under Markowitz.

While typing, Howie looks at Markowitz.

HOWIE

I bet you're Markowitz.

Irked, the shop owner frowns.

MARKOWITZ

Why? Cause I look like a Jew?

HOWIE

Are you Markowitz?

MARKOWITZ

Yeah.

The petite assistant manager smiles.

HOWIE

Then there's no reason to get upset anything, now is there?

Howie glances at his monitor, slides three key cards across the counter, and sets down some pamphlets.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

You're all checked in.

EDGAR

Thanks.

HOWIE

My name is Howie if you need
anything. These pamphlets-
(he pats the stack)
-have the entire convention
schedule and a coupon if you want
to go on the Toulon House Tour.

Edgar and Ashley exchange excited glances.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

There's one more today at six
thirty.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Ensconced and frosted lights illuminate the long brown
hallway. Edgar and Ashley stop in front of a door that is
numbered 336 while Markowitz faces one that is numbered 337.

EDGAR

See you out here in ten minutes.

MARKOWITZ

Roger.

INT. ROOM 336 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

A bolt SNAPS. The lanky fellow opens the door and gestures
into a room that has a four-poster bed, floral wallpaper, and
twilit lace curtains on the far side. Into this space, the
tomboy carries the shoebox.

The door shuts, and the room darkens. A bolt SNAPS. Two
suitcases THUMP on the floor, and the shoebox lands atop a
HUMMING mini-fridge. Edgar removes his shirt as Ashley
unbuttons her cut offs. Quickly, they peel away outerwear.

The lanky fellow closes the distance, pushes the tomboy
against a wooden post, and presses his mouth into hers. They
kiss. Purple-painted fingernails scratch a sinewy back, and
male hands quickly unfasten the hooks of a brassiere.

ASHLEY

Not bad for a comic book guy.

EDGAR

I often exceed low expectations.

Edgar discards the brassiere, lowers his head, and takes
Ashley's left breast into his mouth.

ASHLEY

We don't have ti-

The tomboy GASPS as the lanky fellow presses his hand to the
triangle of her silk panties.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
-time for foreplay.

Ashley turns away, crawls onto the bed, and reaches her right hand into Edgar's boxer shorts. The tomboy pulls the lanky fellow onto the bed by the most willing part of his anatomy.

INT. BLACK SPORTS CAR - SAME

Rain CRACKLES upon the windshield of a black sports car. A POCKMARKED FELLOW of fifty sucks on a cigar and dials the steering wheel toward a sign that reads, 'Postville Exit.' Following this ramp, the man speeds into a rural area and brakes at a stop sign. Something CRACKLES in the trunk.

The Pockmarked Fellow looks behind him, sees nothing, and returns his attention forward. Through the intersection, he accelerates. His cigar glows.

Something flashes across his throat. Stunned, the Pockmarked Fellow GURGLES. Smoke sprays from the neck wound, followed by blood. SKIDDING, the sports car veers into the underbrush.

INT. EDGAR'S BLUE SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER

Rain CRACKLES on the windshield as Edgar drives the blue sedan along a wooded road. Ashley applies purple lipstick in the mirror, and seated in the back and wearing jeans and a baseball cap that reads Fisticuff Comics is Markowitz. Overhanging tree branches reach out from the sides of the road upon which Candace and Nancy died three decades earlier.

The lanky fellow dials the steering wheel and drives into more open terrain. He and his passengers look to the left.

A stone wall that is topped by iron spikes circumscribes the twenty-acre lot in the middle of which stands the dark, three-story mansion where the infamous Toulon murders took place.

EXT. PARKING LOT / TOULON MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Rain CRACKLES upon the pavement. Edgar lunges from his parked sedan into the lot that adjoins the Toulon Mansion, hastens around to the passenger side, and opens his umbrella, which he then holds over Ashley. Together, the couple proceeds to the front entrance and gets under the overhang.

The lanky fellow collapses his umbrella and lobs the thing back toward the car. Markowitz emerges from the backseat, catches the tossed object, and shuts the door. Under the reopened umbrella, the shop owner walks toward the couple.

Thunder RUMBLES. Edgar and Ashley look at the sign on the wall, which reads: "Home of Andre Toulon. All Proceeds from this tour go to the Postville Police Department."

EDGAR
Well that makes this feel a little less exploitative.

ASHLEY
Yeah. Though it'd be better if they specified that the money went to police guns and ammunition. Knives, maybe.

EDGAR
You've got a dark side.

The tomboy smiles brightly.

INT. FOYER & ADMISSION ROOM / TOULON MANSION - SAME

The trio from Portland join sixteen other TOURISTS in the mansion's foyer, which is an oaken room that has a high ceiling and a ticket window, behind which sits a HEAVY TEENAGE GIRL who is texting on her phone. Markowitz stashes the collapsed umbrella in a can that contains ten others as Edgar walks toward the counter. Ashley interposes herself and places a fifty (and the pamphlet coupon) on the counter.

ASHLEY
Three tickets.

The lanky fellow and the shop owner are both surprised.

EDGAR
Thank you.

MARKOWITZ
Yeah. Not needed, but thanks.

ASHLEY
(to Markowitz)
I wasn't able to find you a seven and a half--or a skilled six--but I do appreciate you sharing Edgar with me.

MARKOWITZ
Happy to. And you never know...I might meet a nice, rural seven and a half at the hotel bar. It looked depressing enough to give me the edge.

Ashley pockets her change, takes the tickets, which each have an ominous drawing of the Toulon mansion, and hands one to Edgar and one to Markowitz. Outside, lightning flashes.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)
That reminds me: Did you read the Lightning Girl comics Edgar did?

The tomboy hides her discomfort with a cheerful grin.

ASHLEY
No...not yet. But I will...

Edgar hides his disappointment as thunder RUMBLES.

MARKOWITZ
You should. They're great.

ASHLEY
I'm sure.

FOOTFALLS echo as a stocky, fifty-five year-old woman who wears a security uniform and a name tag that reads, 'Carol' walks into the room. This is Carol Doreski--the policewoman who thirty years earlier found Candace's head in the tree and helped invade the mansion. The currently retired cop looks at the wall clock, which reads 6:30.

CAROL DORESKEI
Is everybody ready?

A MURMUR of assent comes from the crowd, and thunder RUMBLES.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
My name's Carol Doreski, and I'll be your tour guide this evening. I'm a retired police officer who was a part of the team that raided this mansion thirty years ago.

A GOATEED GUY raises his hand.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
Yes, I was one of the shooters.

The hand goes down.

INT. RECEPTION AREA / TOULON MANSION - SAME

The tour guide leads the group into a vast, high-ceilinged room that has two chandeliers, a display case, some framed photographs, two narrow windows, and three old sofas. Plastic chains circumscribe the space. Hanging over the fireplace is a painting of a tall, thirty-five year old man who has a scarred, bald head. Carol Doreski gestures at the portrait.

CAROL DORESKEI
Andre Toulon was born in Paris, France in 1907. Not much is known about his life in Europe, though from a very early age, he was involved with his family's business, which was manufacturing, selling, and performing with puppets.

The tour guide gestures at the empty display case that stands in the far corner.

CAROL DORESKE (CONT'D)

We had three of his puppets in that display case over there until they got stolen.

(she gestures at a framed photograph)

This is one of only two surviving photographs of Les Fantoche Magiques de Toulon. Translated, that means, The Magical French Puppets of Toulon.

Edgar, Ashley, Markowitz, and other Tourists look at a sepia-toned photograph of a striped circus tent, the banner of which reads, 'Les Fantoche Magiques de Toulon.' Around the entrance flap are paintings of puppets, including Blade, Kaiser, and a bald, fat, hook-nosed Moneylender.

CAROL DORESKE (CONT'D)

Andre Toulon was imprisoned in Paris in the late twenties for three years and twice for shorter durations in Norway and Luxembourg, though the charges against him are currently unknown. Not long after his third incarceration, he moved to Germany, where he remained until shortly after the war.

MARKOWITZ

(whispered to Edgar)

Someone fled to Germany?

CAROL DORESKE

During his stay in the Fatherland, Andre Toulon resumed his puppet show-

Carol Doreski directs the Tourists' eyes to a framed photograph in which a happy crowd of husbands, wives, and children watch Les Fantoche Magiques de Toulon. SS buttons and swastika armbands adorn the lapels and limbs of the smiling audience members. Upon the little curtained stage, Blade shoves its knife into the mouth of a hook-nosed, naked puppet that has a Star of David upon its arm. Intestines are drawn from this victim's belly by the tormentor's metal hook.

MARKOWITZ

Jesus.

The newlywed GOTTLIEBS stir uncomfortably as do many others.

CAROL DORESKE

Blueprints for this mansion and bars of gold were sent to the United States from Germany by Andre Toulon as World War II turned in favor of the Allies.

(MORE)

CAROL DORESKE (CONT'D)

Four weeks after Germany surrendered, Toulon and his wife Madeline boarded an ocean liner bound for the United States. During this journey, Mrs. Toulon jumped from the ship and committed suicide.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY / TOULON MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Thunder RUMBLES as the last Tourists ascend the final steps and enter the second floor hallway. Wooden floorboards CREAK under the weight of the group, and Carol Doreski motions to an open doorway on her right. Edgar, Ashley, Markowitz, the Gottliebs, and others look inside. The room within has ten cots that are bolted to the ground and made out of iron. Handcuffs and fetters dangle from these narrow beds, which have holes in their middles.

The tour guide enters the near part of the room, most of which is roped off, and POUNDS her fist against the thick, padded wall. This dull sound does not resonate.

CAROL DORESKE

The walls of this chamber are two feet thick. Soundproof. On the day that the police entered the premises, six of these cots were occupied by women. Four of them were alive, but in terrible shape--their eyes had been gouged out and their bodies were covered with burns and lacerations. All of them were insane, and the two who were eventually identified were both Jewish.

(she points)

Note the hole in the middle of the cot and the drain that's directly below it in the floor.

Edgar eyes the grille that is below the cot and grimaces at Ashley while Markowitz and others shake their heads.

CAROL DORESKE (CONT'D)

I probably don't need to explain what that was for.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY / TOULON MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Carol Doreski escorts Edgar, Ashley, Markowitz, the Gottliebs, and the rest of the Tourists onto the third floor. Hanging from the high ceiling of this oaken passageway are three giant red flags. Each of these has a white circle in its middle and a black swastika.

CAROL DORESKE

It appears as if the war did not end in Germany for Andre Toulon.

(MORE)

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
 (she gestures up)
 Each of these swastikas is five and
 a half feet tall.

MAN WITH GLASSES
 (German accent)
 It's pronounced, 'svastika.'

Carol Doreski eyes the small, fifty-year-old BESPECTACLED
 GERMAN who just spoke, as do most of the other Tourists.

CAROL DORESKEI
 You've got anything else you wanna
 add? Since you're the authority?

Acutely uncomfortable, the little foreigner meekly shakes his
 head, 'no.' Thunder RUMBLES.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
 That was a nein? Good.

Carol Doreski leads Edgar, Ashley, Markowitz, the Gottliebs,
 the Bespectacled German, and the others up the hall. At the
 far end, the tour guide stops and gestures toward a huge
 oaken library that is behind a clear plastic shield.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
 This library contains volumes on
 biology, numerology, astrology,
 eschatology, demonology, and other,
 far more esoteric subjects. These
 were written in thirty-eight
 different languages, not including
 the papyrus scrolls in that case
 over there-
 (she points)
 -which are in two languages that
 have yet to be identified.

The Goateed Guy raises his hand.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
 Yes, we checked the Internet.

The dude lowers his hand, and the tour guide points to a
 glass-enclosed pedestal, where lie two leather-bound tomes.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
 Come closer to look at these...

Edgar takes Ashley by the hand and walks forward, succeeded
 by Markowitz, the Gottliebs, and the Bespectacled German, who
 must stand on his tip toes to see. Embossed in gold leafing
 on the front of each book is swastika.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
 Both of these are from the private
 library of Adolf Eichmann. For
 those of you who don't know,
 Eichmann was credited with
 organizing the Final Solution.

MARKOWITZ

Seems like Toulon deserved a lot worse than what you gave him.

CAROL DORESKEI

Definitely.

(to the group)

Now everyone turn around. We're gonna go back down all those steps you just came up and head for the cellar.

INT. CELLAR / TOULON MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Carol Doreski waits for the last few Tourists to descend the stairway. Edgar, Ashley, Markowitz, the Gottliebs, the Bespectacled German, and others look around a wide concrete cellar that contains benches, kilns, a furnace, sewing machines, iron bars, metal cables, and work tables, upon which lie six headless puppet bodies and seven bodiless puppet heads. Hanging from the walls are recognizable tools, such as saws and hammers, and more esoteric instruments, which have spikes, prongs, and sharp-toothed gears.

CAROL DORESKEI

This cellar workshop is where Andre Toulon manufactured puppets for his mail-order business. Considering the wealth that he had prior to arriving in this country, this 'business' might be more accurately classified as a hobby, albeit one that he took very seriously...

The lanky fellow and the tomboy approach a table upon which lie the muscular torso and disproportionately small legs of a headless puppet. Sitting in a glass case nearby are four pairs of tiny, ivory eyeballs.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)

It is unclear how many of these puppets were made and sent around the United States, Europe, and Asia, though one hundred and twenty-nine of them are expected to be in Postville by tomorrow for the auction.

The shop owner looks at a tool on the wall that resembles a spiked hammer.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)

This room is where we found Andre Toulon on the day that we forced our way inside.

The Bespectacled German looks at a shelf that is filled with tiny, highly articulated fingers.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)

When our unit came downstairs,
Toulon raised his gun, which was a
Luger, and we shot him four times.
He fell to the ground and died
without firing a single bullet.
(recalling the day)
It almost seemed like he wanted to
be executed.

EXT. SOLARIUM / TOULON MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Carol Doreski escorts the Tourists from a long hall into a
solarium, which is furnished with metal frame divans and has
three walls and a ceiling that are made of glass. Rain
CRACKLES upon the roof and blurs the newly risen moon. Edgar
looks at Ashley, who is rubbing her head.

EDGAR

You okay...?

ASHLEY

Yeah. Just a little a headache.

The tour guide gestures to the right, and the group looks
through the indicated glass wall. Outside, lights shine upon
a small building, and sparkling rain HISSES.

CAROL DORESKEI

Andre Toulon's body was claimed by
a distant relative and laid to rest
in that mausoleum.

Thunder RUMBLES as Edgar, Ashley, and Markowitz move toward
the glass and more closely examine the mausoleum. Fifteen
iron rods jut from the roof of this old stone building.

EDGAR

What're those rods for?

CAROL DORESKEI

Nobody's entirely sure. Most
speculations are that they have
some kind of occult significance--
his library's full of that stuff.

EDGAR

They certainly don't match the
architecture.

CAROL DORESKEI

They don't.
(to the group)
This is the end of the tour, so
feel free to look around for a few
minutes and ask me questions....

The tomboy, who is rubbing her aching head, the lanky fellow, and others the stare outside at the stone mausoleum wherein lies the body of Andre Toulon. Dimly heard is the sound of CRACKLING STATIC and an eerie HUMMING.

Lightning flashes. Somebody GRUNTS, and the Tourists look over. The Goateed Guy has his hands cupped around his nose. A rivulet of blood trickles down his fingers.

GOATEED GUY
Nosebleed.

BESPECTACLED GERMAN
Ja. Me too.

Thunder RUMBLES as Edgar looks at the Bespectacled German, who holds a handkerchief to his face.

CAROL DORESKI
Well this is a first.

Slowly, the white handkerchief turns red.

INT. EDGAR'S BLUE SEDAN - LATER

Rain CRACKLES upon the windshield as Edgar drives Ashley and Markowitz along a wooded road. Seeing a cross street, the lanky fellow dials the steering wheel clockwise. The blue sedan noses through glittering precipitation and into the parking lot of the Postville Lodge.

Looking for a space, Edgar nears a raincoat-clad PLUMP OLDSTER who stands beside the upraised hood of a passenger van. The lanky fellow stops his car and cracks the window.

EDGAR
Need a jump?

PLUMP OLDSTER
Thanks, but I tried that. Don't know what the heck's wrong with it.

EDGAR
Okay. Good luck.

Edgar rolls up his window. A MUSCULAR DUDE shuts the door of a silver sports car, and the lanky fellow pulls up behind this vehicle to wait for the space. The big guy slots his keys and fires the ignition, but nothing happens. Again, the Muscular Dude tries to start the car to no avail.

MARKOWITZ
By the entrance. Over there-

Markowitz points to a space that is at the far end of the row, and Edgar accelerates toward this opening.

INT. LOBBY / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

The trio from Portland enters the lobby, which is peopled by TWENTY GUESTS who have recently arrived for the convention. Markowitz eyes this assemblage and motions to a doorway, which reads, 'The Lounge.'

MARKOWITZ
I'm gonna scout some numbers.

ASHLEY
Good luck.

A BOOKISH BLONDE who has a paperback in her hand, low bangs, and glasses walks toward the bar.

MARKOWITZ
Target acquired.

EDGAR
Send me a text if you go down for breakfast in the morning.

MARKOWITZ
Copy.

Focused, the shop owner walks toward The Lounge.

ASHLEY
Is he ever successful?

EDGAR
More often than leap year.

INT. ROOM 336 / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Edgar kisses Ashley into the unlighted room. The lanky fellow elbows the door shut. Darkness falls, and the couple stumbles blindly until the tomboy SLAPS a switch on the wall. Two amber table lamps illuminate.

Edgar kisses Ashley toward the bed. The tomboy's left sneaker SMACKS against something. Distracted, the pair uncouples and looks at the floor. Lying there is the shoebox.

ASHLEY
I swear I put that on the fridge.
Did somebody...?

Concerned, Edgar scans the room, which seems undisturbed, and opens the bathroom and the closet, which are empty. Ashley steps out on the balcony that overhangs the swimming pool, looks around, and see nothing suspicious. Fifty feet below, somebody SPLASHES. The tomboy shuts the door.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Maybe we knocked it off when we were...rushing.

Edgar picks up the box. Shredded bubble wrap falls to the ground, and his stomach sinks. Dreadfully, he turns the container over in his hands. The bottom has been cut open and the inside is empty. Blade is missing.

EDGAR

Jesus crap.

ASHLEY

You think somebody who works here took him?

EDGAR

I think that a lot of very valuable collectables showed up in a small town in the middle of nowhere...and that I was a moron to leave mine in a hotel room like I did. To trust one hotel lock to protect something that's this valuable.

Frustrated by the loss, Edgar shakes his head, SNORTS, and reaches for his cell phone.

ASHLEY

Gonna call the police?

The lank fellow retrieves his cell phone.

EDGAR

Management first, but yeah, the police too. Jesus crap.

Edgar fingers his pass code and unlocks the device. His thumb TAPS to the list of 'Recent Calls,' and he locates one for the Postville Lodge. The word, 'Dialing...' flashes upon the screen.

Ashley reinspects the room as Edgar raises the ringing phone to his ear.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Hi. I'm a guest in-

Static CRACKLES in the receiver, loudly, startling the lank fellow. The tomboy looks over.

Edgar lowers the CRACKLING device from his ear. The numbers on the screen bend and stretch, warped by some strange interference. A muted HUM is now also audible.

MALE VOICE FROM THE PHONE

(whispered)

Rester ... dans ... l'ombre...

A dark, grainy, and distorted image of a bed flashes upon the screen. This point of view is from the ground. Suddenly, the image moves toward the space underneath the mattress.

The CRACKLING STATIC and the HUM stop; the image is replaced by the menu, and the cell phone icon is illuminated.

 HOWIE FROM THE PHONE
Sir...are you still there...?

Perplexed, Edgar raises the cell phone to his ear.

 EDGAR
Yeah. There was some interference
on the line
 (he listens)
This is Edgar Weston in 336.
Something was taken from my room.
Stolen.
 (he listens)
Okay. Thanks.

The tomboy ruminates as the lank fellow kills the connection.

 ASHLEY
Did that voice say, 'Rester dans
l'ombre'?

 EDGAR
I'm not sure. Is that French?

The tomboy wrinkles her mouth.

 ASHLEY
Yeah... It means, 'stay in the
shadows.'

INT. ROOM 408 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

A bolt CLICKS, and the Gottliebs enter their room, which is a double-sized suite. The slim, twenty-three-year-old, black-haired newlywed who is named RACHEL turns on the light, and a dark shape disappears under the bed. Startled, she takes a step backward and looks at her very tan husband, JASON, who is five years older, neatly bearded, and wearing a yarmulke.

 RACHEL
Did you see that?

Jason shuts the door and twists the lock, which SNAPS.

 JASON
What?

 RACHEL
I thought I saw something go under
the bed.

 JASON
Like what? A cockroach? A mouse?

 RACHEL
Bigger.

The man removes his cell phone from his pocket, dials on the flashlight function, and walks across the room. Kneeling, he lowers his head and looks under the bed. Something glimmers.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Jason.

Jason looks back and sees Rachel, who is holding an empty shoebox in her hands.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Our Kaiser's gone. Do you-

JASON

Hold on a sec.

The man turns his head and again looks at the glimmering thing that lies under the bed. Beneath the far corner of the box spring is the missing puppet, which has a kaiser helmet, eye slits, bullets for teeth, and gloved arms.

JASON (CONT'D)

He's down here.

Jason stands up, turns off the light and pockets the device.

RACHEL

How'd he get over there?

JASON

Housekeepers, I guess.

The man walks toward the far corner of the bed.

RACHEL

Well considering what we saw at the Toulon Mansion, I wouldn't've minded if it'd gotten stolen. Having something like that makes me really uncomfortable.

JASON

I hear you...though lots of Jewish people collect Nazi memorabilia--medals, pamphlets, posters--stuff like that. My Uncle Shelley does.

Kneeling, Jason fishes his hand underneath the box spring.

RACHEL

Why's that?

JASON

Now where'd this guy go?

The man lowers his head to the ground, activates his cell phone flashlight, and sees the puppet, which now lies three feet from the corner of the bed.

JASON (CONT'D)

Hm.

Mildly confused, Jason shuts off and pockets his cell phone, reaches further under the bed, and grabs Kaiser by the left foot. The thing is slowly drawn out into the open.

RACHEL

Why does Shelley collect Nazi stuff? As a reminder of what happened back then?

JASON

It's a reminder, but also, there's a feeling of empowerment there.

The man stands up and carries the puppet over to his wife.

JASON (CONT'D)

Like saying to the Nazis, 'You're big plans of genocide and world domination didn't work, and now, your symbols are nothing more than trinkets for us to collect. Souvenirs of your failure and our survival.

Jason raises the Kaiser in front of Rachel. There is a CLICK, and the puppet's left glove falls off. The revealed stump is a metal tube that ends with an open hole.

JASON (CONT'D)

Shit. His arm-

Kaiser points its left arm at the Gottliebs.

RACHEL

Is it a windup?

JASON

I didn't-

ROARING flames burst from the opening and engulf the heads of the Gottliebs. Terrified eyes shrivel, faces blister, and curling hair disintegrates under the fiery blast of Kaiser, who is also known as TORCH.

The puppet is dropped to the ground. Rachel falls over, hits her smoking head against a bureau, and loses consciousness. GURGLING and blind, Jason drops to his knees. His face is a purplish-red mass of blisters.

Torch stands up on its thick little boots and walks forward.

GURGLING, the man rises to his knees. The puppet draws near and raises its flamethrower.

JASON (CONT'D)

R-R-Rachel...?

Torch blasts ROARING fire at the left side of Jason's head. His ear shrivels into a dark nut, and he collapses. The puppet looks at the woman, who is unconscious, but breathing.

Torch walks over to Rachel and presses its flamethrower to her swollen left eye. Fire ROARS. The woman GURGLES. On the puppet's neck, a tiny thermostat CLICKS from 'Low' to 'High'. ROARING red flames turn bright bluish-white. Fire roasts the woman's brain, and her shaking body goes still.

Torch retrieves its fallen glove, covers over the flamethrower, and walks toward the door. The puppet presses its back to the doorjamb, looks up at the doorknob, and waits for somebody to enter the room...

INT. ROOM 312 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Lounging on a hotel bed is CHRISTIAN, a handsome and chiselled blond man of thirty who wears gym shorts, a tank top, and his cell phone's hands-free device. A bright orange shoebox sits on the nightstand nearby.

CHRISTIAN

(into his phone)

Mom...I just want to take some time to reevaluate things. Look at myself for a bit and not rush into anything like I did the last time.

(he listens)

Right. And the gallery requires plenty of my attention right now.

(he listens)

No...not once since New Years. Not even a single sip.

(he listens)

Thanks. It was hard at first, but now I don't even miss it, except maybe a little at openings.

Listening, the handsome fellow looks at the shoebox.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

We'll see. There're at least eight others up for auction, and mine isn't in the best condition, but I'm expecting to get about three thousand. Maybe two if the attendance is hurt by the storm.

(he listens)

Well okay. Enjoy your bridge game and tell Aunt Betty I say hi.

(he listens)

I love you too. Bye.

Christian thumbs the disconnect button, claims the shoebox from the nightstand, and removes the lid. Upon a bed of lavender tissue paper lies a ONE-ARMED BLADE. The skull of this puppet is yellow and cracked, its hat is missing, and its clothing is frayed.

The handsome fellow tilts the box so that the light from the lamp spills inside. Something glimmers deep within the puppet's dark eye sockets.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Hm.

Curious, Christian leans closer. Blades shoots from the openings and pierce his eyes.

YELLING, he drops the box. His eyelids flutter, trying to close, but cannot because of the one-inch scalpels that are sticking out of his pupils.

A three inch stiletto emerges from the puppet's right hand as it lunges at the handsome fellow, who is YELLING.

Blade swipes the weapon across Christian's vocal cords. His YELL turns into a wet BUZZ. The puppet lands on the chest of the handsome fellow and plunges its stiletto into his heart, again and again and again. Blood pumps from the wound, and gym shorts darken with urine. Soon, the man stops moving.

Blade retracts its stiletto, walks across the athletic corpse, reaches the head, and removes both of its scalpels from the victim's eyeballs. The puppet then wipes blood and ocular fluid off of these weapons onto a pillow.

Blade slots a one-inch scalpel into its left eye socket, where it CLICKS. The other one is placed in the other side, where it CLICKS. Both spring-loaded weapons are now in place.

The puppet pulls a blanket over the dead body, turns off the lamp, hops onto the windowsill, and undoes the latch. Rain HISSES as Blade exits...

INT. ROOM 238 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

A SWARTHY MAN who is fifty, chubby, and bearded looks at the puppet that sits beside the television (which currently shows a muscular wrestler climbing the ropes). Eight-inch tall AUTOGIRO has a bald, ebony head, red glass eyes, and a single oval grille for a nose and mouth. Its short left arm ends with a metal fist, and its long right arm supports a foot-long helicopter blade that is made out of steel.

At present, the Swarthy Man returns his attention to the television. Upon the screen, the muscular wrestler reaches the top rope, crouches, and leaps into the air.

SWARTHY MAN

(Romany accent)

Kill the bastard sonuvabitch!

The airborne man SMACKS his stomach against that of his prone opponent. WHEEZING, the fellow on top tries to pin the other. A referee SLAPS his hand against the mat and SLAPS the canvas again, but the pinned wrestler kicks out.

ANNOUNCER

Rough Dog kicks out at two.

SWARTHY MAN

Total bullshit man. He got you with the frog splash.

Irked, the Swarthy Man walks into the bathroom and SLAPS the switch, which CLICKS. Two frosted bulbs brighten beside the mirror. Listening to the match through the open door, the chubby fellow faces the toilet and unzips his pants.

Upon the dresser, Autogiro rolls onto its side and raises its right arm. The helicopter blade starts to spin, and its red eyes shine, blinking on and off.

ANNOUNCER

Rough Dog is hurting and looking for some payback right about now.

A stream of urine CRACKLES in the toilet bowl. Pleasurably, the Swarthy Man SIGHS. Buoyed by the WHIRRING blade, Autogiro rises into the air. Urine CRACKLES. Upon the television screen, Rough Dog runs across the canvas.

Thunder RUMBLES, and the television image flickers, warps, and for a second shows a stone wall in which lie three purple, egg-shaped gems--the inside of the mausoleum.

At present, the wrestling program reclaims the television.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

Looks like Rough Dog is going for a suicide dive!

Pissing, the Swarthy Man hears something and looks over his shoulder. Autogiro WHIZZES past. Skin, fat, and sinew RIP. The man's eyes widen. Blood runs from his cut throat.

Circling back, Autogiro WHIZZES past the nape of the Swarthy Man. Vertebrae CRACKLE. The fellow's head tilts weirdly, falls off his shoulders, and CLANKS in the sink. Decapitated, the body collapses and THUDS upon the bathroom tile.

Autogiro WHIZZES toward the ajar window as the wrestler on TV lunges between the ropes and SMACKS into his foe. Red eyes blinking, the airborne puppet flies into the HISSING storm...

INT. THE LOUNGE / POSTVILLE LODGE - NINE THIRTY

A mellow ROCK BALLAD from twenty-five years ago plays at a moderate volume in the dimly-lit lounge, which is peopled by sixty GUESTS who are young, middle-aged, and old, single, coupled, and in groups. Two BLOND WAITRESSES (one of whom is Asian) hurry from tables to the bar and kitchen and back again in an attempt to handle the atypically large crowd. Calmly and efficiently dispensing drinks is a tall, strong, and fat black man who has 360 waves, a gold silk shirt, matching linen pants, a goatee, and the nickname CUDDLY BEAR.

Markowitz currently inhabits the corner stool of this long bar. His fingers TAP anxiously upon the base of his martini glass as he studies the Bookish Blonde, who avidly reads her paperback forty feet away.

Nearer to the shop owner, a lean, twenty-four-year-old TAN WOMAN with a low-cut black dress, a pout, and pricey jewelry watches the silent television that hangs upon the wall. This sullen beauty is approached by a BRONZE MAN who has a two thousand dollar watch and a suit that costs twice as much.

BRONZE MAN
Are you waiting for someone?

TAN WOMAN
Maybe.

BRONZE MAN
Does he look as good as I do?
(he surveys the lounge)
Cause that guy's not here.

A tiny smirk appears on the face of the Tan Woman, and the Bronze Man seats himself in the adjacent stool and smiles.

BRONZE MAN (CONT'D)
I'm Robert.

Watching this interaction, Markowitz finds his resolve.

MARKOWITZ
Bartender.

Cuddly Bear sets two drinks down in front of an OLD COUPLE and turns his head.

CUDDLY BEAR
(southern accent)
Be right with you, cuz.

The big black bartender walks toward the shop owner.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)
What d'you want from the Cuddly Bear?

Markowitz points out the Bookish Blonde, whose drink is hidden by her large purse.

MARKOWITZ
I want to buy her a drink. What's she having?

CUDDLY BEAR
Tea.

The shop owner wrinkles his brow and ruminates.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)
Need a moment to figure your
strategy, cuz?

MARKOWITZ
I'd like a tea bag. Whatever kind
she's having.

Cuddly Bear reaches under the bar and retrieves a packet,
which he then places on the counter before Markowitz.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)
Just be a few seconds.

CUDDLY BEAR
No rush.

The big bartender waits as the shop owner withdraws a pen.
Upon the packet that covers the tea bag, he writes-- 'How do
you feel about bald guys? A. Pretty good B. Need hair'

Markowitz slides the packet and a ten across the counter.

MARKOWITZ
Please deliver this to the bookish
beauty.

CUDDLY BEAR
The Cuddly Bear can do that.

The bartender pockets the bill and takes the tea packet to
the far side of the bar. There, he sets the tiny missive in
front of the target and says something.

The Bookish Blonde glances at Markowitz, reads the packet,
and withdraws a pen from her big purse.

Heart beating, the shop owner drinks from his martini. It is
unclear how the woman feels about his playful solicitation.

The Bookish Blonde hands the packet back to Cuddly Bear, says
something, and reclaims her paperback. The bartender turns
around and walks toward the shop owner.

Equally hopeful and doubtful, Markowitz watches Cuddly Bear,
who soon arrives and sets the tea packet upon the counter.
Below the shop owner's inquiry--'How do you fell about bald
guys? A. Pretty good B. Need hair'---the woman wrote, 'Yuck!'

Stomach sinking, Markowitz looks at the Bookish Blonde, who
does not raise her gaze from her paperback.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)
Want another martini?

MARKOWITZ
Yeah. And I think I'd like to order
some food too.

CUDDLY BEAR

Aight.
(calling out)
Nagisa.

The blond Asian waitress NAGISA looks at Cuddly Bear, who then gestures to Markowitz.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)

Wants to order.

NAGISA

One minute.

CUDDLY BEAR

Aight.

MARKOWITZ

(to Cuddly Bear)
How much would it cost me to have
you drop a laxative in the bookish
beauty's drink?

CUDDLY BEAR

Seven hundred and fifty dollars.

MARKOWITZ

That's a pretty high--and specific--
price.

CUDDLY BEAR

The Cuddly Bear don't wanna hurt
nobody--even a hater--but Mrs.
Cuddly Bear really wants herself a
new hi-def TV.

(he scratches his neck)
Cuddly Bear's got principles, but
he's also got priorities.

Markowitz smiles at Cuddly Bear and extends his hand.

MARKOWITZ

Markowitz.

CUDDLY BEAR

Cuddly Bear.

MARKOWITZ

I've heard. Have a drink on me.

CUDDLY BEAR

Thanks, cuz.

A menu lands on the bar, and Markowitz looks at Nagisa, who is about thirty, a little chubby, and adorned with glittering pink makeup. It is clear that he thinks she is very cute.

MARKOWITZ

Thank you.

NAGISA
(light Japanese accent)
I'll be back for you order.

The shop owner sees something, and his eyes widen.

MARKOWITZ
Is that an Empress Asayuki pin
you're wearing?

Surprised, Nagisa turns to face Markowitz.

NAGISA
You know Empress Asayuki?

The shop owner nods his head importantly.

MARKOWITZ
(in Japanese)
I have every manga and dvd.

Surprised and impressed, Nagisa appraises Markowitz.

NAGISA
I'll be back soon. Very.

The shop owner bows his head politely as the smirking waitress departs. Heartened, he sips his martini and looks around. It is then that he notices the red and blue police lights that are flickering outside of the lobby.

INT. LOBBY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

The automated glass doors part, and into the lobby stride OFFICER SANCHEZ, a trim, mustached Hispanic policeman of thirty years, and DETECTIVE BROWN, a suited cop with an upheld badge who has two decades and sixty pounds on his associate. The petite fellow Howie steps from the counter.

HOWIE
I'm the assistant manager, Howie
Smith, we spoke on the phone just a-

DETECTIVE BROWN
Let's talk on the way.

INT. ROOM 336 / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Edgar opens the door of room 336 and admits Detective Brown, Officer Sanchez, and Howie. Ashley stands beside the small coffee maker, which currently GURGLES and drips. The assistant manager closes the door, and the senior cop points a thick index finger.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Leave that open.

HOWIE
I would rather not disturb the-

DETECTIVE BROWN
Keeping things hushed quiet only
helps criminals. Open it.

Howie opens the door; Detective Brown looks at Edgar and Ashley and returns his gaze to the former as Officer Sanchez withdraws a notepad and pen.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
You're Edgar Easton, owner of the
doll that got stolen, correct?

EDGAR
I am. And it's a puppet.

DETECTIVE BROWN
She's with you?

EDGAR
She is.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Name?

ASHLEY
Ashley Summers.

Officer Sanchez writes while Detective Brown eyes Edgar.

DETECTIVE BROWN
How long've you known this young
lady?

EDGAR
About seven weeks.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Your girlfriend?

The lanky fellow reddens and clears his throat.

EDGAR
We're dating.

Detective Brown scrutinizes Ashley for a long moment and returns his gaze to Edgar.

DETECTIVE BROWN
She knew about the doll? How much
it was worth?

The implication of this statement hits the lanky fellow.

EDGAR
Yes, she did, but I-

DETECTIVE BROWN
When'd you first tell her about the doll?

EDGAR
I don't understand what this has to-

DETECTIVE BROWN
You don't need to. When'd you first tell her about the doll?

EDGAR
Three weeks ago. Maybe four.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Before or after you two had intercourse for the first time?

EDGAR
That's none of your business.

DETECTIVE BROWN
It is my business. Now answer the-

ASHLEY
Edgar told me about the puppet one week after we'd had intercourse for the first time. We did it three more times that day, and eleven times the following week.

The tomboy eyes the senior cop directly.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Need any other stats, gramps?

DETECTIVE BROWN
You've said more than plenty.

Officer Sanchez clears his throat, and Detective Brown returns his focus to Edgar.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
When did-

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Nein, nein, nein!

Everybody in room 336 look through the open door at the third floor hallway. Something SLAMS.

MALE VOICE (CONT'D)
Mein gott! Sheiza!

Something THUDS and echoes. The assistant manager swallows dryly, and the policemen exchange glances.

HOWIE
I'll go see what's-

DETECTIVE BROWN
All of you stay here.

EXT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

A raised semiautomatic precedes Officer Sanchez out of room 336, and soon, Detective Brown steps into the hallway. His gun dangles from his right arm, and his blue eyes scan the area. At the far end of the passage he sees an open door, which is numbered 302. Something THUDS in that room.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Sheiza!

Guns raised, the policemen proceed toward the disturbance. Door number 323 opens and reveals a MALE HIPSTER in plaid who wears a hat. Officer Sanchez removes his weapon from the kid.

MALE HIPSTER
What's-

DETECTIVE BROWN
Shut your mouth and that door.

The Male Hipster withdraws and closes the door as the policemen near the open room. Something BANGS.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Nein, ne-

DETECTIVE BROWN
(calling out loudly)
Sir, do you understand English?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
(German accent)
Ja. I do, yes.

DETECTIVE BROWN
This is Detective Brown of the
Postville Police Department. Come
out of your room right now with
your hands up. Be calm about it.

From the open door walks the short Bespectacled German who was on the Toulon Tour. His tremulous hands are raised.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
What's your name?

BESPECTACLED GERMAN
Heinrich Wagner.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Is anybody else in that room?

HEINRICH WAGNER
Nein--no, I mean. No.

Officer Sanchez strides forward, points the snout of his firearm into the doorway, and scans the interior, where suitcases, blankets, and a chair have been tossed about. Rain HISSES outside a broken window that is on the far side of the ransacked room.

OFFICER SANCHEZ
It's white.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Check the corners.

The Hispanic policeman walks into room 302, and the senior cop appraises the little Teutonic fellow.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
You can lower you hands, Mr.
Wagner.

Heinrich Wagner drops his arms, and his eyes sparkle.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
So what're you making all this
commotion over?

HEINRICH WAGNER
Somebody stole mein puppets.

At the other end of the hallway, Edgar, Ashley, and Howie emerge from room 336.

DETECTIVE BROWN
How many'd you have?

HEINRICH WAGNER
Five. Two of them were-
(his voice breaks)
-were in-
(his voice breaks)
-n-n-near mint condition.

Thunder RUMBLES as Officer Sanchez walks out of room 302.

OFFICER SANCHEZ
Nobody. But the window's smashed.

Detective Brown turns to face Howie, who is sweating.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Somebody stole Mr. Wagner's dolls.
(he holsters his gun)
This incident is starting to turn
into a happening.

INT. SUITE 404 / POSTVILLE LOUNGE - SAME

Rain CRACKLES against the window of the deluxe suite. Shirt unbuttoned, belt removed, and shoes off, the Bronze Man peels the glimmering black dress off of the Tan Woman, whom he recently met in the bar. Her brassiere and thong are shining red satin upon the curves of her taut physique.

TAN WOMAN

Hang it up in the closet.

Holding the dress, the Bronze Man walks toward the closet.

BRONZE MAN

You ever work in a strip club?

TAN WOMAN

No.

BRONZE MAN

You could.

TAN WOMAN

That's a compliment?

BRONZE MAN

Coming from a member of the gender
that calls the shots, it is.

The handsome fellow slides open the closet door, reaches inside, and lets the dress fall on the ground. A ten-inch tall FIGURE is covered by the black fabric.

BRONZE MAN (CONT'D)

There.

The handsome fellow closes the door, shrugs off his shirt, and unzips his pants.

TAN WOMAN

I'm not blowing you.

BRONZE MAN

You didn't look like the type
that'd be good at it anyway.

TAN WOMAN

Is that supposed to be reverse
psychology?

BRONZE MAN

No. You're just not the type.
Probably too concerned about how
many calories are in a guy's
nectar.

The Bronze Man discards his pants and exposes his tight-fitting black underwear.

TAN WOMAN
So then what type am I?

A smile plays upon the face of the handsome fellow as he approaches the sullen beauty.

BRONZE MAN
I bet you don't have any tan lines-

The Bronze Man spins the Tan Woman around, unfastens her brassiere, which falls to the ground, and pulls her thong from her buttocks. Red satin lands between two black high heels. The man makes a quick survey and sees no tan lines.

BRONZE MAN (CONT'D)
I was correct.

TAN WOMAN
You still didn't answer me.

The Tan Woman looks over her shoulder as the Bronze Man yanks a beaded cord that opens the curtains.

BRONZE MAN
Your this type-

The handsome fellow pushes the sullen beauty against the window. Cold glass presses against her palms, her face, and her breasts. Glimmering rain HISSES outside.

The Bronze Man snatches a condom from the nightstand and turns to the Tan Woman, who is still pressed against the window. Foil paper RIPS as he removes the contraceptive.

The closet door slides open. From this aperture sneaks the ten-inch tall Figure that is hidden underneath the black dress. This unseen puppet proceeds to the outer door as the duo GRUNTS. Upon cold glass, bare flesh SQUEAKS.

INT. ROOM 120 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

One of the two crewcut, broad-shouldered female bikers who earlier that day honked at Edgar wears a baby blue kimono in bed while watching a show about furniture refurbishment. Her name is BETSY.

Something CRACKLES. The crewcut woman grabs the remote, presses the mute button, and looks at the bathroom door.

BETSY
Anne? Was that you?

No response comes from closed room. Water DRIPS, and something CRACKLES.

BETSY (CONT'D)
Anne? Are you're making that noise?

No response comes from the bathroom. Water DRIPS.

BETSY (CONT'D)
Did you fall asleep again...?

There is no reply to this inquiry.

Irked, Betsy SIGHS, heaves herself from the bed, tightens the belt of her baby blue kimono, and approaches the closed bathroom door. Something SQUISHES.

Pausing, the crewcut woman looks down. The beige carpet at the edge of the door is dark red.

BETSY (CONT'D)
Anne!

With a fist, Betsy POUNDS the door, POUNDS again, and POUNDS a third time. Her bare toes SQUISH in the blood-soaked rug.

The crewcut woman lowers her right shoulder and lunges like a football player at the door. Her body SLAMS into the panel, which CREAKS, but holds fast.

Betsy takes three steps back, crouches, and runs forward. Her right shoulder SLAMS into the door, which CRACKS and flies open. Feet SQUEAK as she slides across the bloody tiles, grabs a towel holder, and finds her balance.

Betsy turns her head. Inside a bathtub that is filled with dark crimson fluid lies ANNE, whose unblinking eyes stare up at the ceiling.

Horrificed, the crewcut woman runs to her lover and kneels. Her hands SPLASH thick red liquid that is more blood than water, and from this gore, she raises the dead woman's arms. There are no marks upon either wrist, nor is there a pulse.

Eyes filling with tears, Betsy pulls the stopper and POUNDS a fist against the wall. The drain GURGLES. Gently, the crewcut woman closes the eyelids of her dead lover.

BETSY (CONT'D)
Anne, Anne, Anne...

The level of GURGLING blood lowers, revealing two red kneecaps, two red breasts, two red thighs, one red navel, two red ankles, and two red feet.

Betsy notices something and leans forward for a closer look. Upon Anne's right foot are three swollen holes. Each of these deep wounds is about one centimeter in diameter.

Confused, the crewcut woman scans the area for the cause of these injuries. On the opposite wall of the bathroom she sees an eight-inch hole. Debris lies below this dark opening.

Wiping away tears and SNIFFLING, Betsy looks at Anne.

BETSY (CONT'D)
What the fuck happened to you?

INT. GREEN STATION WAGON - SAME

Rain CRACKLES upon the windshield of a pine green station wagon that is in the crowded Postville Lodge parking lot. Two long-haired, male STONERS of nineteen years sit in this foggy vehicle and stare up at the fourth floor window, against which the Tan Woman presses her hands, face, and breasts while the unseen Bronze Man takes her from behind. The freckled dude who sits at the steering wheel drags on a joint and passes it to his bearded friend, who then inhales.

BEARDED DUDE

Those two've been going a while.
(he exhales smoke)
Long enough for me to get a
stiffie, get soft, and get another
stiffie.

FRECKLED STONER

Wanna go to a strip club?

BEARDED DUDE

You're a genius.

FRECKLED STONER

Literally. Remember when I took
that IQ test online? I got a one
fifty-three.

The Freckled Stoner reclaims the joint and drags.

BEARDED DUDE

But that was like five thousand
joints ago. Who knows what you'd
get now? Might be down to a
hundred.

FRECKLED STONER

Totally.

The Stoners CHUCKLE like oldsters. Both of them return their red, dilated gazes to the fourth floor window, against which the Tan Woman presses herself while rocking back and forth. Her hands clench and unclench as she silently groans.

BEARDED DUDE

Lemme have another hit.

The Freckled Stoner relinquishes the joint and stares at the Tan Woman. Rain CRACKLES on the windshield.

BEARDED DUDE (CONT'D)

You already forget about the strip
club, didn't you?

FRECKLED STONER

Nah, dude. Nah. I didn't forget.

BEARDED DUDE
 I'm guessing you're at ninety.
 (he exhales smoke)
 Maybe eighty.

The Freckled Stoner GIGGLES, sees something in the rearview mirror, and turns around. Three small, dark FIGURES scamper across the asphalt and disappear under a white passenger van that is parked in the next row.

FRECKLED STONER
 You see those things?

The Freckled Stoner points to the rear windshield, and the Bearded Dude looks in the indicated direction.

BEARDED DUDE
 What things?

FRECKLED STONER
 The three little guys that just ran under that van.

BEARDED DUDE
 That sounds dubious.
 (he takes a hit)
 Highly.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Edgar, Ashley, Howie, and Heinrich Wagner stand opposite Detective Brown and Officer Sanchez in the third floor hallway. A small and anxious uniformed housekeeper of fifty-five who is named LETICIA has joined the group. The senior policeman eyes the Hispanic woman.

DETECTIVE BROWN
 Why're you nervous?

LETICIA
 The police make me nervous.

DETECTIVE BROWN
 Where-

A cell phone BUZZES, and Detective Brown glances at a luminous screen. Holding up a thick finger, he steps away from the group and puts the receiver to his ear.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
 What?
 (he listens)
 Unbelievable. What room?
 (he listens)
 One twenty, got it. I'll head over with Sanchez and the manager.
 Cordon of this place five minutes ago.

The senior policeman eyes his associate and the petite assistant manager.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
Somebody died in room one twenty.

Howie pales, and Edgar looks uncomfortably at Ashley.

INT. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Detective Brown and Officer Sanchez follow Howie up the brown and beige hallway toward Betsy, who is dressed in denim and standing outside of room 120. A cigarette sits in her trembling hand, and her eyes are red from crying.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Betsy Pressford?

Numbly, the crewcut woman looks at the approaching group.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Edgar and Ashley stand in the hallway while Heinrich Wagner walks into his room, closes the door, and SNAPS the bolt.

EDGAR
I wanna see what's going on.

ASHLEY
You think this's related to whoever stole the puppets?

EDGAR
I don't know why it would be...but there's a whole lotta shit happening in the same place in a very short period of time. You can go back to the room if you'd rather not c-

A kiss silences this suggestion.

INT. FIRST FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Edgar and Ashley step from the elevator and walk toward room 102, the ajar doorway of which is crisscrossed with yellow police ribbons. VOICES echo from the crime scene as the couple from Portland draws near.

DETECTIVE BROWN (O.S.)
You were romantically involved with Miss Jenson?

BETSY (O.S.)
For three years. We were...going to get married this fall.

DETECTIVE BROWN (O.S.)
Did the two of you have-

Lights flash, startling Edgar and Ashley, and a fire alarm BEEPS. The couple pauses and looks around.

DETECTIVE BROWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Pardon us, ma'am.

Ducking under the yellow ribbons, Detective Brown, Officer Sanchez, and Howie stride from the room. The policemen throw unfriendly looks at the couple from Portland and turn to the assistant manager, who is currently pressing his cell phone to his right ear. Lights flash, and the fire alarm BEEPS.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
Where's this coming from?

Howie listens to his cell phone and looks at Detective Brown

HOWIE
Second floor. Room two forty-four.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Stairs.

The policemen and the assistant manager hasten into the stairwell, where the couple from Portland soon follows.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Nine hotel GUESTS stand in the beige and brown hallway in which lights flash, and the alarm BEEPS. Edgar and Ashley emerge from the stairwell as Officer Sanchez yanks a fire extinguisher from the wall. Twenty yards away and monitored by Detective Brown, Howie nervously slots a plastic card into a lock. A green light flashes, and a bolt CLICKS.

The senior policeman dismisses the assistant manager, puts his shoulder to the wall, turns the handle, and kicks the door. Smoke billows from the interior.

DETECTIVE BROWN
This is the police. Is anybody in there?

Nothing but smoke and the CRACKLING sounds of fire emerge. Continually, the alarm BEEPS. Detective Brown nods.

Officer Sanchez storms the room with the fire extinguisher. The apparatus HISSES, HISSES again, and HISSES a third time.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
Sanchez? How're things?

OFFICER SANCHEZ (O.S.)
Fire's out.
(he COUGHS)
Gonna get some ventilation going-

Glass SHATTERS within the room, and Howie manually shuts off the fire alarm. Edgar and Ashley approach the scene and garner the attention of Detective Brown.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Go back to your room.

EDGAR
We aren't interfering with your work, and we wanna see what's going on here.

DETECTIVE BROWN
You're a goddamn-

OFFICER SANCHEZ (O.S.)
Brown. We've got a body.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Crud.

Detective Brown turns away from Edgar, who looks with concern at Ashley. The senior policeman eyes the assistant manager.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
What's the name of the guest in this room?

HOWIE
Sidney Goldstein.

INT. ROOM 244 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Rain HISSSES through the broken window as Detective Brown enters the smoky interior and locates Officer Sanchez, who is standing in the far corner of the room with a flashlight in his left hand. The senior policeman circumvents the charred bed and sees the object that his associate currently illuminates. On the floor lies the reddened body of a middle-aged man, whose eyes, nose, and mouth have been replaced by a gaping hole that is the diameter of a soda can. The carpet below is visible through this scorched opening.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Crud.

A cell phone RINGS in the hallway outside.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Howie places the receiver to his ear as Edgar, Ashley, and other Guests watch the smoky doorway of room 244.

HOWIE
What?
(he turns pale)
The Gottliebs? Both of them?

Listening to the caller, the petite assistant manager wipes sweat from his face.

HOWIE (CONT'D)
I'll-I'll tell the police. Keep the
door shut and-and don't touch
anything, okay?

Howie pockets his cell phone, clears his throat, and walks to the doorway. There, he leans his head inside.

HOWIE (CONT'D)
Detective Brown. Two more bodies
were found by housekeeping. Rachel
and Jason Gottlieb in room three
hundred eight.

Two police siren WAIL outside of the building. Ashley shakes her head and looks at Edgar.

ASHLEY
We should leave.

EDGAR
I was thinking the same thing, it's
clearly-

Edgar sees something that silences him and walks forward for a closer look. The carpet in front of the door to room 238 is stained red.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
Howie.

Startled, Howie spins around and faces Edgar, who then motions to the carpet. The assistant manager sees the blood and shakes his head in disbelief. His fingers TAP, TAP, TAP on his cell phone as he approaches the newest crime scene.

Police sirens WAIL as Detective Brown and Officer Sanchez stride from the room. Guns dangle from their hands.

DETECTIVE BROWN
The Gottliebs are in room three
zero eight?

EDGAR
Looks like there's another scene
right here-

The lanky fellow motions to the stain, and the senior policeman looks at the overwhelmed assistant manager.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Who's staying there?

HOWIE
Hezekiah Buckland.

DETECTIVE BROWN

Open it.

Howie slots his trembling master key as Detective Brown and Officer Sanchez approach the door.

ASHLEY

Hezekiah?

An idea occurs to Edgar, who then removes his cell phone, dials up a search engine, and types out, 'Hezekiah Buckland.' Arrows turn upon the small screen.

At room 238, the senior cop stops and KNOCKS on the door.

DETECTIVE BROWN

This's the police--we're coming in.

No response emerges from the room, though none was expected. Detective Brown flings the door, raises his pistol, and walks through the entryway.

INT. ROOM 238 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

The senior policeman strides into the room. Underneath his boots, the bloodstained carpet SQUISHES, while on the television, two sweaty wrestlers exchange hard chops. The open window and the HISSING rain sparkle red and blue, illuminated by the flashing lights of the two police cruisers that now block the parking lot exits.

Detective Brown surveys 238, and his face stiffens. A decapitated body lies in the bathroom doorway. Floating in the sink is a swarthy head.

DETECTIVE BROWN

Crud.

(calling out)

Another body.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Police sirens WAIL as Detective Brown exits the room and joins Officer Sanchez. Edgar, Ashley, Howie, and a dozen worried GUESTS inhabit the second floor hallway. An exasperated BLACK WOMAN hurries toward the policemen.

BLACK WOMAN

Somebody took my puppets! Both of-

DETECTIVE BROWN

Hold on, ma'am.

(to Sanchez)

What kind of name's 'Ezekial Buckland'?

EDGAR

A gypsy name.

The policemen turn around and eye the lanky fellow.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

These are hate crimes, Detective--
what's happening here. A lesbian, a
Jewish guy, a Jewish couple, and a
gypsy have been murdered. Somebody-

DETECTIVE BROWN

Shut that mouth.

(loudly to the crowd)

The police have cordoned off the
parking lot and this building.
Every single person needs to go
downstairs to the convention hall
right now. Attendance is mandatory.
Unless you're dead, you're a
suspect.

Concerned MURMURS percolate amongst the Guests while Edgar
and Ashley ponder the grim situation.

EDGAR

Let me text Markowitz--make sure
he's all right...

INT. ROOM 337 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

A shaded lamp illuminates room 337 and Markowitz, who
currently opens his laptop computer for the blond Asian,
Nagisa. The shop owner fingers the power button, and the
glowing screen sparkles in the waitress's bright eyes. Held
in her right hand is a perspiring beer bottle.

MARKOWITZ

Have you ever been to Portland?

NAGISA

Twice. I liked it there, though
it's really expensive.

MARKOWITZ

Not if you hit the right spots and
have a place to stay...

Nagisa reddens and drinks from her beer as Markowitz types
his password and fingers the return key. A bright smile
illuminates the waitress's face.

NAGISA

You didn't hide it from me.

MARKOWITZ

What?

NAGISA

Your password. Most people do. Even
my last boyfriend did.

MARKOWITZ

I trust you, and-
 (in Japanese)
 -the Japanese are people of honor,
 are they not?

Nagisa CHITTERS, and a cell phone DINGS, announcing a text message. Irked, Markowitz shuts off the offending device and RATTLES computer keys with his nimble fingers. Arrows turn while the laptop downloads a video.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

Technically, this's just fan
 fiction. But I prefer it--quite
 significantly--over the last two
 official movies that came out.

The waitress swallows a mouthful of beer and sees something.

NAGISA

You're selling one at the auction?

Confused, Markowitz looks at Nagisa.

MARKOWITZ

One what?

The waitress points the neck of her beer bottle, and the shop owner turns his head. Sitting upon the windowsill is One-Armed Blade. Behind the puppet and the glass pane, orange rain HISSES past a BUZZING sodium lamp.

Confused, Markowitz stares at One-Armed Blade.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

It's not mine. And I have no idea
 how it got here.

NAGISA

Maybe it walked.

The waitress CHITTERS as the shop owner approaches the window. His brow wrinkles.

MARKOWITZ

Looks like somebody tore off one of
 his arms.

Markowitz reaches out and picks up One-Armed Blade. The puppet dangles limply in his hands as he makes his appraisal.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

His hat's gone, and his hair's
 pretty ratty...
 (he thinks)
 I don't think this one's Edgar's.

Markowitz turns One-Armed Blade over and inspect its skull. Deep with its eye sockets, two metal points glimmer.

Curious, the shop owner raises the puppet closer to his face. Dark cloth covers the major part of the embedded scalpels.

Something BEEPS, startling Markowitz. One-Armed Blade falls to the carpet. Its skull bounces, and limp limbs flop.

The fire alarm continues to BEEP. Somebody POUNDS on the door and POUNDS on another.

OFFICER SANCHEZ (O.S.)
This is the police. Every single
person in this building is required
to go down to the convention hall
right now. This is an emergency.

Continually, the alarm BEEPS. Markowitz looks at the cute, blond Japanese-American waitress who is in his hotel room. Disappointed, he shakes his head.

OFFICER SANCHEZ (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Everybody go downstairs right now.

Markowitz closes his laptop, gestures to the exit, and follows after Nagisa. Remembering something, he turns around and looks at the floor. One-Armed Blade has vanished.

INT. ROOM 412 / POSTVILLE LOUNGE - SAME

The fire alarm BEEPS, and a fist KNOCKS on the door of a room in which a tall, blond, blue-eyed man of forty-four who is named STROMMELSON pulls a t-shirt over his muscular chest. At the door stands PRINCESS, an athletic black woman of the same age who has an eighties-styled denim dress, a sizable Afro, and boots. Both of them wear gold wedding bands.

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)
Everybody must go downstairs right
now. There are no exceptions.

Continually, the fire alarm BEEPS. The tall Swede walks toward the black woman, who unlocks the safety bolt and glances at her husband.

PRINCESS
(English Accent)
Snag a jacket, love. Who knows how
long this'll take.

STROMMELSON
(Swedish accent)
I thought you could keep me warm.

Princess SMACKS Strommelson on the rump and gestures.

PRINCESS
Don't stall.

The tall Swede turns around, walks across the room, and slides aside the closet door.

A cool wind blows his hair, and he looks for the source of this breeze. On the wall behind the uppermost shelf sits a deep black hole.

PRINCESS (CONT'D)

Hurry, love.

Strommelson snags a blue coat and turns away. A dark FIGURE leaps from the hole and SMACKS against the back of his neck. The tall Swede stumbles forward and GRUNTS.

PRINCESS (CONT'D)

Love...?

Concerned, Princess turns around. A drop of water SPLATS on the tip of her nose, and she looks up.

Blade drops from a hole in the ceiling and lands on Princess's face. Its steel hook sweeps through her Afro and digs into her scalp. The puppet thrusts its knife twice.

Blinded, Princess SCREAMS and stumbles backward. Attached to her scalp by its hook, Blade swings its stiletto across her throat. Her cry is silenced, and blood fountains.

Paralyzed, Strommelson stares at Princess, who THUDS upon the ground. The unseen dark Figure on the back of the Swede's neck digs deeper. Blood runs from the man's ears and nostrils. His limbs shake for a moment, and then go still.

Robotically, Strommelson dons his jacket and raises the collar to cover up the Figure that is attached to the back of his neck. The Swede grabs the ankle of his dead wife and drags her toward the closet. His stiff movements resemble those of a puppet...

INT. CONVENTION HALL / POSTVILLE LODGE - 11:06

Eighty anxious GUESTS smoke, drink, and CHATTER in the vast oaken auditorium, which has picture windows on one wall, two hundred chairs, twice as many auction catalogues, twenty dealers' tables, an American flag, and a wall clock, which shows that the time is currently six after eleven. Upon the stage and near Howie at the podium stands Detective Brown, who is flanked by Officer Sanchez, CORPORAL TODD (a young redheaded cop), PATROLMAN LITTLE (a big dude), and LIEUTENANT JO DORESKEI, the hard-faced daughter of Carol Doreski (who is also present and still wearing her tour guide uniform).

Thunder RUMBLES, and rain HISSES. Holding Ashley's hand, Edgar anxiously surveys the group. His eyes flicker past Betsy, Carol Doreski, Heinrich Wagner, Cuddly Bear, Strommelson, two Stoners, Leticia, and many others. Worried, the lanky fellow shakes his head.

EDGAR

I'm gonna text him again.

ASHLEY

It looks like he found a skilled 6.

Ashley points and Edgar turns his head. Through the door walk Markowitz and Nagisa. Relieved, the lanky fellow raises his hand and waves.

EDGAR

Markowitz! Over here.

Wending the crowd, Markowitz and Nagisa walk toward Edgar.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Glad you're okay!

The lanky fellow lowers his arm and knocks a few catalogues off of a dealer's table. Kneeling on the floor, he gathers them together. The covers read, 'Puppet Auction Catalogue' and show three Blades in varying conditions, two Kaisers (Torches), and an Autogiro. Also pictured is a Mr. Pumper, a white puppet that has stumpy legs, long arms, three-fingered hands, a spigot-like head, and a boxy torso that has a ribbed accordion in its middle.

Edgar returns these catalogues to the table. His eyes linger momentarily on the collection of creepy puppets.

Feedback SCREECHES and WHINES. Startled, the lanky fellow, the tomboy, the shop owner, and many others cover their ears.

Near the podium, Howie fumbles with the microphone.

HOWIE

Sorry.

The explosive word echoes, and the assistant manager yanks out a cable and dials knob. Outside, rain HISSES.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Can everybody hear me?

Guests nod heads and say 'Yes.'

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Detective Brown from the Postville Police Department will let you know what's going on. Detective?

Detective Brown replaces Howie at the podium, braces the wood, and eyes the Guests.

DETECTIVE BROWN

As many of you know, there've been multiple cases of theft and murder in the Postville Lodge this evening. The police department is investigating these crimes, and we will need to interview every single person in this room before the night is over.

MURMURS of concern and disapproval come from the crowd.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
We'd like to prioritize any
individuals who have witnessed-

EDGAR
Excuse me Detective, but is it safe
for all of us to stay here?
Considering what's-

DETECTIVE BROWN
(irked)
Hold all questions until I've
finished. Nobody is allowed to
leave until given authorization by
the police, and that will not
happen in the near future. So-

Something BOOMS. Startled YELLS and GASPS come from the crowd. The overhead lights darken for a moment and brighten.

Edgar puts his arm around Ashley, and Nagisa presses her frightened face against Markowitz, who then cradles her shoulders. Frightened Guests look around with wide eyes.

Upon the stage, Detective Brown leans close to Howie and quietly asks a question. The petite assistant manager nods his head, 'yes.'

Edgar hears a SPLASH and looks toward the picture window, which admits a view of the patio. Because of the rainfall, the surface of the swimming pool looks like it is boiling.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
Everybody needs to remain calm.

The lanky fellow and others return their gazes to the podium.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
In the event of a power failure,
the backup generator will kick in,
so we won't be left in the dark.
(he nods his head)
Now...does anybody think that he or
she has seen any-

Something BOOMS, and the room falls into darkness. Guests YELL, and anxious MURMURS pass through the crowd. Edgar and Ashley huddle close together, as do Markowitz and Nagisa, the two Stoners, Cuddly Bear and the Blond Waitress, and many other couples.

There is a dull BUZZ, and soon, the overheads bulbs illuminate. The tense atmosphere is lessened by the return of light. Nervous Guests CHATTER.

Something SPLASHES. Again, Edgar looks at the swimming pool. Two small black shadows move underneath the roiling surface.

EDGAR
(to Ashley and Markowitz)
Guys, look over-

DETECTIVE BROWN
Quiet! Everybody.
(he lets the words echo)
Please. Now has anybody seen
anything suspicious during-

HEINRICH WAGNER
Mein gott! It isn't safe for us to
stay here. There have been murders,
und thefts, und the power-

DETECTIVE BROWN
Nobody is leaving this place until
we've completed our investigation,
and anyone who interrupts me from
this point forward will be charged
with obstruction. Now, has-

Something BOOMS, and the lights die. Guests SCREAM, and fire
alarms BEEP. Wary of the bedlam that is imminent, Detective
Brown sends Officer Sanchez, Corporal Todd, Patrolman Little,
and Lt. Jo Doreski to the exit.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
Stay where you are. Do not attempt-

CUDDLY BEAR
Run!

Fifty frightened and angry Guests hasten toward the doorway,
where stand police officers who are armed with batons and
pepper spray. Edgar and Ashley watch the stampede from afar,
alongside Markowitz, Nagisa, and thirty others.

EDGAR
Jesus crap.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Anybody who tries to leave will be
restrained by the police and taken
to jail!

Heedless, the crowd of fifty rushes the door. None of the
police officers are happy about what they are about to do.
Cuddly Bear, the Stoners, Leticia, Heinrich Wagner, the
Bookish Blonde, and other Guests continue forward.

CUDDLY BEAR
Out the way, cuz!

ANGRY MALE GUEST
Let us go!

The fire alarms stop for no known reason. Edgar steps in
front of Ashley and winces as the opposing sides meet.

CAROL DORESKEI
Please don't!

The charging Guests reach Officer Sanchez, Patrolman Little and Corporal Todd. Pepper spray HISSES, and the Angry Male Guest SHOUTS as do Heinrich Wagner and seven others. Batons SMACK fleeing citizens. A stealthy Guest CRACKS a golf club against the skull of the large flatfoot, who then collapses to the floor. Cuddly Bear tilts his head low like a bull and SLAMS into Sanchez and Todd, who are knocked aside. The big black bartender snatches a baton and continues forward.

CUDDLY BEAR
C'mon, y'all!

Lt. Jo Doeski is the only officer who stands between the fleeing Guests and the exit. Fearlessly, she fires her gun into the ceiling, BANG, BANG, BANG, holsters the weapon, and raises her baton. Nearly forty people run at the lone woman, who is ready to meet them all.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Doeski! Stand down.

LT. JO DORESKEI
I can stop fifteen. Maybe twenty.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Stand down.

Frustrated, Lt. Jo Doeski SPITS and steps aside.

INT. LOBBY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Thunder RUMBLES as Cuddly Bear leads the Guests across the lobby of the hotel, and points his baton at the emergency exit. To this manually operable door, the groups proceeds. Beyond the glass, the storm HISSES.

The big bartender SLAPS the emergency exit panel and shoves the door with his baton. Fleeing Guests hasten outside.

EXT. PARKING LOT / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

People run into the HISSING storm, which the flashing lights of two parked cruisers turn red and blue. Sitting in one of the cars is a thirty-five year-old fellow who is named OFFICER WALLACE, and occupying the other is the sixty-four year-old Sergeant. These vehicles block off the exits.

ANGRY FEMALE GUEST
Assholes!

CUDDLY BEAR
Outta the way, police, or we'll get you outta the way!

Guests squint as cruiser spotlights glare in their eyes. The Sergeant thumbs a squawk box, and a speaker CRACKLES.

SERGEANT THROUGH SPEAKERS
Return to the building at once!

These words echo, unheeded, as the housekeeper Leticia runs to her red hatchback, flings the door, slots her key, and twists her hand. Her engine CHITTERS, SQUEAKS, and dies.

LETICIA
Coche Americano come mierdo.

A FEMALE YUPPIE climbs into her luxury car and twists the ignition. Her engine CHITTERS twice. A spark flashes underneath the hood, and the car EXPLODES.

Guests SCREAM as a ROARING ball of fire replaces the pricey silver vehicle. WHIZZING metal stabs Cuddly Bear's left thigh, and he SPLASHES face first onto the wet pavement.

Spinning steel SLASHES across the stomach of the Bookish Blonde. She looks down. Pinkish-gray entrails bulge from the open wound, and she collapses on the asphalt.

A flying hubcap SMACKS the fourth floor window, against which the Tan Woman presses her naked body while her raised buttocks receive the Bronze Man. The glass pane CRACKS and SHATTERS, and the sexually-conjoined duo falls from the hotel. The face of the Tan Woman SMACKS the pavement a moment before she is fatally impaled by the Bronze Man, whose spine CRACKS in half against her pelvic bone.

BEARDED STONER
Holy Mexico.

Car alarms HONK and BEEP as the explosion fades. Uncertainly, people continue toward their vehicles.

SERGEANT THROUGH SPEAKERS
Everybody return to the building,
right now!

The Stoners tumble inside of the green station wagon. Winded and GASPING, the driver slots the key, and twists his hand. The engine CHITTERS and RUMBLES. Both dudes CHEER.

The Freckled Stoner toggles the gear, backs out of the space, and aims for the nearer exit, which is blocked by the cruiser that contains the Sergeant.

The driver HONKS, puts his car in neutral, and STOMPS the accelerator. His engine ROARS aggressively. In the other seat, the Bearded Dude shoves his head through the window.

BEARDED DUDE
Outta the way or we'll ram you!

SERGEANT THROUGH SPEAKERS

Go back to the hotel or you're
going to jail!

The Freckled Stoner sees something odd, turns around, and looks in backseat. There, he discovers a hole in the floor.

FRECKLED STONER

You see this hole back here?

The Freckled Stoner looks at the Bearded Dude, and the glove compartment opens. A BLACKENED BLADE leaps from the nook onto the passenger, hooks his scalp, and stabs his eyes. The horrified driver flings his door, SPLASHES on the asphalt, and runs back toward the hotel.

Furious, the Sergeant twists the ignition. His cruiser EXPLODES. The blast immolates the cop, a TEENAGER, and a FATHER and DAUGHTER who are standing nearby. Shrapnel CRACKS car windows and CLANKS against the metal bodies of automobiles. Steel chunks SLAM into two motorcycles and impale the spines and lungs of six more fleeing Guests.

Terrified survivors scramble toward the hotel through the HISSING downpour, which the lights of the remaining cruiser turn red and blue. The police officer who sits within the intact vehicle no longer has a head.

Frantic Guests run for the hotel entrance. Hurrying feet SPLASH water on dead bodies, which have gouged eyes, cut throats, broken necks, missing limbs, and charred faces. The Freckled Stoner pauses and helps an OLD WOMAN to her feet.

Cuddly Bear reclaims his police baton, rises from the asphalt, WHEEZES, hears somebody CRYING, and turns his head. In the farthest row of the parking lot, a hysterical nine-year-old BOY is kneeling in front of a dead parent.

CUDDLY BEAR

Kid! C'mon!

Obliviously, the distraught child SOBS. The big bartender shakes his head, limps hurriedly to the child, and take his little hand.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)

C'mon. We gotta go ins-

Somebody YELLS. Cuddly Bear and the nine-year-old Boy look in the direction of this cry.

The Goateed Guy lies on the asphalt between two cars. His legs are twisted and broken. Standing near him is an eighteen-inch tall puppet that has a muscular, disproportionately large torso, huge hands, small stocky legs, and a PINHEAD, from which it derives its name. This strong thing holds a motorcycle engine over the face of the injured man.

GOATEED GUY

Stop! Please don't-

Pinhead drops the engine on the Goateed Guy's head. Facial bones CRUNCH, buckling, and his skull CRACKS.

Disgusted, Cuddly Bear takes the hand of the nine-year-old Boy and hastens down a different row.

Pinhead removes the motorcycle engine from the smashed face and dented head of the Goateed Guy and grabs the man by the neck. Its muscular hands squeeze. Bones CRACKLE as the puppet reinflates the crushed head with blood. A purple tongue waggles in the Goateed Guy's GURGLING mouth, and yellow-green phlegm bubbles from his nostrils.

The swollen head BURSTS. Brains SMACK a nearby car, and the emptied skull dumps lumpy gore onto the asphalt.

In the adjacent row, Cuddly Bear escorts the Boy toward the entrance. Something WHIRRS, and the duo pauses. Twenty feet away, two small blinking red lights appear in the darkness. These luminous dots hover three feet off of the ground.

CUDDLY BEAR
The fudge is this...?

Gripping the police baton, Cuddly Bear looks at the Boy. Police lights pan across the row and briefly outline the airborne puppet, Autogiro.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)
Stay behind the Cuddly Bear. And
hold onto my silk. Tight.

The shocked child grabs the back of the gold silk shirt as the big bartender eyes the two blinking red lights that hover between himself and the front of the hotel.

Cuddly Bear takes one step to the left. WHIRRING, the two blinking red dots drift in the same direction.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)
Biscuits.

Cuddly Bear leads the Boy two steps to the right. WHIRRING, the two red dots mirror this lateral move.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)
Hold my silk tight and stay behind
me no matter what. I'm gonna get us
clear.

The Boy tightens his grip on Cuddly Bear's shirt. Raising the baton, the big bartender charges the two red dots.

A blue police light illuminates Autogiro, which flies directly at Cuddly Bear's face. The big bartender evades to the right and swings his weapon.

WHIRRING, Autogiro plunges below the attack and flies directly at Cuddly Bear's stomach.

The big bartender raises his baton and swings down. Wood SMACKS steel. Splinters fly as the spinning blade CHOPS, CHOPS, CHOPS the baton.

Autogiro SWOOPS behind Cuddly Bear, who then runs forward. His feet SPLASH red and blue water.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)
Keep with me.

The big bartender reaches the hotel entrance.

INT. LOBBY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Cuddly Bear closes the door and looks through the two-inch thick glass into the lot. Autogiro is gone.

CUDDLY BEAR
Kid. You still with me?

The big bartender turns around, but does not see anybody. Confused, he scans the area. Somebody SCREAMS.

HISPANIC WOMAN (O.S.)
Your shirt! The back-

A HISPANIC WOMAN points at Cuddly Bear's back, and he turns to look at his reflection in the lobby mirror. Tightly gripping the fabric of his gold silk shirt are the two severed hands of the nine-year-old Boy.

Sickened, the bartender looks at the parking lot and walks toward the exit. Lt. Jo Doreski interposes herself.

LT. JO DORESKI
These doors are staying shut.

Patrolman Little and Corporal Todd run RATTLING chains across the doors and SNAP padlocks.

CUDDLY BEAR
There's a boy out there. Look-

Cuddly Bear motions to the small hands that grip his shirt.

LT. JO DORESKI
You're alive. He probably isn't.
The doors stay shut.

CUDDLY BEAR
But-

Lt. Jo Doreski raises her pepper spray.

LT. JO DORESKI
This's my next reply.

Frustrated and sickened, Cuddly Bear limps away. Chains RATTLE, and padlocks SNAP.

Standing in the middle of the lobby, Edgar looks out at the parking lot. A silhouetted Blade puppet runs through the HISSING blue and red storm.

EDGAR

You guys saw that, right?

Ashley, Markowitz, and Nagisa grimly nod their heads. A deep seated anger simmers in the lanky fellow.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

So now I know what really killed my little brother.

Howie, Betsy, Heinrich Wagner, Carol Doreski, and others stare in confusion and horror at the parking lot and the shocked, injured, and soaked survivors who just came inside. Thunder RUMBLES as Detective Brown walks to the auditorium.

DETECTIVE BROWN

Okay everybody, let's regroup in here.

Edgar points in the other direction.

EDGAR

The Lounge doesn't have windows.

The senior cop is irritated by the contradictory suggestion, but still sees some sense in it.

DETECTIVE BROWN

Fine. Into The Lounge.

The survivors of the group that went into the parking lot and the others who stayed behind walk toward The Lounge. A few hysterical, SOBBING KIDS and OLDSTERS are aided by more collected Guests. In the far corner, Officer Sanchez uncurls the small hands from the back of Cuddly Bear's shirt.

Edgar, Ashley, Markowitz, Nagisa, Betsy, Howie, Carol Doreski, and Heinrich Wagner (whose eyes are still swollen from pepper spray) near The Lounge. Robotically following this group is Strommelson, whose raised collar still conceals the Figure that is attached to the back of his neck.

A thought occurs to the lanky fellow, who then pauses. The tomboy and the shop owner turn their heads.

EDGAR

Keep going. I'm gonna grab something.

INT. THE LOUNGE / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

Three battery-powered storm lamps illuminate The Lounge, where forty-six Guests gather around the central dining tables. Standing at the entryway and holding drawn firearms are Lt. Jo Doreski and Corporal Todd.

Quick FOOTFALLS echo as Edgar enters the room. Cradled in his arms is tall stack of catalogues that he soon sets in the middle of the group.

EDGAR

Everybody should take one--so we know what we're up against.

Guests MURMUR and take magazines that are filled with photographs of the puppets. Betsy claims a catalogue and looks at Edgar.

BETSY

You're saying that a puppet killed my partner? A goddamn toy?

EDGAR

I know it doesn't make sense...but we all saw what happened out there in the parking lot.

CUDDLY BEAR

Some of us did more than just see theses niggas.

HEINRICH WAGNER

Mein gott.

ASHLEY

This is crazy.

Markowitz riffles a catalogue as Detective Brown steps into the middle of the group and clears his throat.

DETECTIVE BROWN

We've called for police assistance from the two nearest towns--Mountainview and Whitecrest. They should get here in two hours.

Edgar and Ashley grimace.

HISPANIC WOMAN

Two hours?

CUDDLY BEAR

Biscuits.

Unhappy Guests MURMUR and shake their heads.

MARKOWITZ

Fuck, and double fuck.

DETECTIVE BROWN

Right. In the meantime, we need to defend ourselves.

(he eyes the crowd)

Does anybody here have any idea how this's happening? How these puppets can do what they're doing?

Confused and fearful faces stare back at the senior cop, but nobody says anything.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
So then we should capture one and see out how it works.

CUDDLY BEAR
You and your blue buddies seem to be the ones with the guns.

DETECTIVE BROWN
Correct. And that's a good thing considering the terrible judgement that many of you have shown thus far this evening.

Eyeing the survivors of the parking lot massacre, the senior cop lets his admonition ring. A few people GRUMBLE, but there is no verbalized defense of this unwise action.

DETECTIVE BROWN (CONT'D)
So we grab one, find out how it works--how it can be stopped or killed. Any idea how many there are?

CAROL DORESKEI
One hundred and twenty-nine were to be auctioned off tomorrow. So at least a hundred are here now.

CUDDLY BEAR
Biscuits.

Edgar shakes his head as do Ashley, Markowitz, and Nagisa.

DETECTIVE BROWN
The only other question to ask right now is 'Why?' 'Why're they doing this?'

EDGAR
They're Nazis.

Every single person in the room looks at the lanky fellow.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
They targeted Jewish people, a gypsy, and a gay woman, and they were made by a guy who worked for the Third Reich. I don't think that's all coincidental.

DETECTIVE BROWN
They killed pretty indiscriminately in that parking lot out there.

EDGAR

Yeah...but that was when people were leaving--and trying to fight back--so maybe some kind of self-defense instinct kicked in. Or maybe they just got pissed.

DETECTIVE BROWN

Why would a guy like Toulon--or anyone--make Nazi puppets?

EDGAR

Well...a puppet would be a really good spy, right? It could go anywhere--inconspicuously--and look for undesirables. If Anne Frank was hiding in your basement, a puppet could find her.

CAROL DORESKEI

What? Like a bloodhound?

EDGAR

Yeah. One that you give to your kid for his or her birthday.

For a moment, these ideas settle on the fearful crowd.

DETECTIVE BROWN

And what exactly do you do for a living, Mr. Easton?

EDGAR

Draw and sell comic books.

DETECTIVE BROWN

So then you're an authority on this? Nazi puppets?

EDGAR

I have an imagination. And my dad's an asshole cop, so that kind of person doesn't intimidate me.

Unpleasantly, the senior cop and the lanky fellow eye each other. Thunder RUMBLES as a REDNECK scratches his nape.

REDNECK

I don't mean to offend nobody, but if this guy's right, shouldn't we send the Jews and queers somewhere else?

ASHLEY

That might've offended somebody.

Uncomfortably and suspiciously, Guests look at each other.

REDNECK

Liberals are so damn touchy about-

DETECTIVE BROWN
 Shut that mouth.
 (to Edgar)
 So why now and why here, Mr. Comic
 Book?

The lanky fellow contemplates this enigma.

EDGAR
 I don't know. The storm, maybe? But
 whatever the reason, you're right--
 we need to grab one and see how it
 works.

MARKOWITZ
 I'll do it.

Edgar, Ashley, Nagisa, Detective Brown, and others look at
 Markowitz, whose eyes are shining with hate.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)
 My great-grandfather had the
 numbers on his arm. The stories
 that he told us...
 (he shakes his head)
 These Nazi puppets want a Jew, I'll
 be the bait. But once we've learned
 what we need to learn, I get to
 kill the fucking thing.

DETECTIVE BROWN
 You've got an idea?

Markowitz turns to Howie, the petite assistant manager.

MARKOWITZ
 Do you have a menorah in storage?

INT. CONVENTION HALL / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

In the convention hall, Markowitz strikes a match, which
 HISSES, and lights a candle. Wind WHISTLES past an ajar
 window that is twenty yards behind his back. On the far side
 of the glass lies the HISSING storm, the swimming pool, and
 the moonlit patio. Beyond that is pure darkness.

MARKOWITZ
 (in Hebrew)
 Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our
 God...

The shop owner touches the flickering flame to a candle that
 is nestled within a golden menorah.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)
 (in Hebrew)
 Sovereign of the Universe...

Thunder RUMBLES and lightning flashes. Momentarily visible below two dealers' tables are Officer Sanchez and Lt. Jo Doreski. Markowitz shares the flame with a third candle and then a fourth.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)
 (in Hebrew)
 -Who has sanctified us with His
 commandments and-

Something CLICKS against the window. The shop owner's breath catches, but he does not turn around. With a trembling hand, he lights another candle. Wax DRIPS.

Underneath the tables, Lt. Jo Doreski raises her semiautomatic and Corporal Todd grips a dark flashlight.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)
 (in Hebrew)
 -and commanded us to light-

A small humanoid PUPPET vaults through the open window and into the room. Wheels SQUEAK as the invader zips across the tiles and rolls directly for Markowitz.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)
 -the lights-

The Puppet rolls toward the shop owner. Lt. Jo Doreski aims and fires, BANG, BANG. The first shot SHATTERS a tile, and the second shot CLANKS against the little attacker. Knocked by the bullet, the Puppet flies through the air, SMACKS into the back wall, and CLATTERS on the floor.

Markowitz turns around as Corporal Todd shines his flashlight on the attacker, which has a dense multi-purpose tool for a left arm, an adjustable wrench depending from its right shoulder, and metal wheels on its feet. Its head is a collection of bolts and screws. This is MECHANIKER. At present, the puppet returns to its feet and rolls forward. Screwdrivers, scissors, and wire cutters unfold from its extended left arm.

The policewoman fires, BANG. A bullet CLANKS against metal, and the puppet falls over, rights itself, and zips forward.

LT. JO DORESKI
 Markowitz. Behind me.

Candle in hand, Markowitz scrambles behind Lt. Jo Doreski. The puppet rolls directly at its Semitic prey.

Corporal Todd follows Mechaniker with his flashlight beam. Lt. Jo Doreski steadies her aim and fires, BANG, BANG. Bullets CLANK against the bolts and screws that are its head. Tools SCRATCH tiles as the puppet slides across the floor.

Lt. Jo Doreski slots another clips, chambers a bullet, and hastens toward Mechaniker, which is already standing up.

MARKOWITZ

Try its legs.

The gun muzzle flashes, BANGING. Bullets sever the puppet's left and right legs. Mechaniker CLATTERS on the floor. The crippled puppet reaches its arms forward and swings its body pendulously toward Markowitz.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

Arms.

LT. JO DORESKI

Aren't many options.

Gunshots BANG in the convention hall as the arms are shot off of Mechaniker. The limbless body CLATTERS on the ground. It wriggles, but is unable to move.

LT. JO DORESKI (CONT'D)

Corporal. Window.

Corporal Todd hastens across the room while Markowitz returns to the menorah and lights the last two candles.

MARKOWITZ

(in Hebrew)

-of Hanukkah. Amen.

The redheaded policeman arrives at the window and reaches for the latch. A big hand shoots through the opening and grabs his wrist. YELLING, the cop drops his flashlight and goes for his semiautomatic.

Bones SNAP and sinew CRACKLES as Corporal Todd's arm is twisted in a full circle and RIPPED from his shoulder by Pinhead, who is standing outside on the patio.

Bleeding in massive gouts, the redheaded cop THUDS on the tile. The policewoman raises her gun and runs forward, squeezing her trigger, BANG, BANG, BANG.

Shots WHIZ through the opening, and one SMACKS Pinhead on its left shoulder. The puppet SKIDS across the patio, rises to its feet, and disappears into the HISSING storm.

Boots SPLASH blood as Lt. Jo Doreski SLAMS the window and twists the latch, which CLICKS. At present, she kneels beside her fallen peer, who shakes, GASPS, and bleeds.

LT. JO DORESKI

Hang on, Corporal.

Lt. Jo Doreski grips Corporal Todd's raw, torn shoulder to stop the bleeding, but is unable to staunch the flow of gore. Something gray flies through the storm at the window.

MARKOWITZ

Lieutenant! Watch-

A hurled cinder block SHATTERS the window and SMACKS Lt. Jo Doeski in the shoulder. Through the opening leap a NEAR MINT BLADE and TUNNELER, a puppet in a raincoat that has a WHIRRING metal drill on its bald head.

Falling glass CLINKS. Lt. Jo Doeski raises her gun as Tunneler jumps off of the windowsill. Its WHIRRING drill SLAMS into her neck, and blood fountains from her mouth.

The puppet settles on the policewoman's shoulder and withdraws its drill, which is covered with veins and arteries. WHIRRING, the tool spins. Part of the cop's circulatory network is RIPPED from her neck and gathered like spaghetti around a twirling fork. GURGLING, the tough policewoman raises her shaking gun.

Near Mint Blade leaps from the sill, hooks Lt. Jo Doeski's left ear, and pulls her to the blood-soaked tiles.

Terrified, Markowitz flees, remembers something, takes a few steps backward, and grabs the cylindrical torso and severed arms of Mechaniker. Carrying these remains, he runs toward the entryway. His FOOTFALLS echo across the convention hall.

The puppets extract themselves from the still body of the policewoman and give chase. Tunneler rips veins and arteries from its drill as it runs, and Near Mint Blade raises its weapons. The distance between the murderous duo and their Semitic prey is forty feet.

FOOTFALLS echo as Markowitz speeds toward the doorway. At present, he looks over his shoulder. Twenty feet separate him from the puppets. A bloody drill, a bloody hook, and a bloody stiletto glimmer as they pass the menorah.

FOOTFALLS big and small echo. Only ten feet separate the GASPING man from the puppets.

Markowitz lunges through the doorway. Officer Sanchez and Detective Brown materialize in the opening and aim their semiautomatics. Blade and Tunneler veer in different directions as the muzzles flash, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG...

Knocked by a shot, Tunneler SKIDS across the floor and SMACKS the far wall. There, it rises to its feet, jumps to the windowsill, and leaps outside. The policemen look for Blade, who has vanished.

Gun raised, Detective Brown eyes the two dead officers, the broken window, and the HISSING storm.

OFFICER SANCHEZ

We're gonna get their bodies,
right?

With misgivings, the senior cop shakes his head, 'no'.

DETECTIVE BROWN

We need to seal this off right now.

Detective Brown steps back and Officer Sanchez SLAMS the door. Heavy objects THUD as the vast hall is sealed off.

INT. KITCHEN / THE LOUNGE / POSTVILLE LODGE - MOMENTS LATER

A storm lantern illuminates the steel and tile kitchen. Markowitz moves through the score of Guests who inhabit this space and sets the jittering body and still arms of Mechaniker on a cutting board. Standing nearby is Edgar (who is riffling an auction catalogue), Ashley, Nagisa, Detective Brown, Cuddly Bear, Heinrich Wagner, Betsy, the Freckled Stoner, the Redneck, a Mexican COOK, and Strommelson, whose parasitic passenger is still covered by his raised collar. Officer Sanchez and Patrolman Little monitor the door.

EDGAR

This one's called Mechaniker.

HEINRICH WAGNER

That's German for mechanic.

MARKOWITZ

Probably could've figured that out.

EDGAR

What happens if you touch one of its arms to its body?

Markowitz picks up the right arm, which is an adjustable wrench, and touches its upper end to the shoulder. A purple spark CRACKLES, and the mouth of the tool opens.

MARKOWITZ

Yikes.

The shop owner drops the wrench, which CLANKS upon the tiles.

DETECTIVE BROWN

So it's still alive.

EDGAR

If it is alive.

DETECTIVE BROWN

(to Markowitz)

Break it open.

Markowitz raises a meat tenderizer over his head and swings. The kitchen hammer CLANKS against the cylindrical torso, which sustains a minor dent. Again, the shop owner swings the tenderizer at the body. Metals CLANK to little avail.

CUDDLY BEAR

Cuz...you want the Cuddly Bear to smash that nigga?

After a glance at Nagisa, Markowitz shakes his head.

MARKOWITZ

Thanks, but I've got it.

Fist clenched tightly, Markowitz repeatedly hammers the body of Mechaniker. Metals CLANK, CLANK, CLANK, and a gash appears in the dented surface. From this opening shine two rays of purple light. The shop owner and most of the Guests withdraw from this pulsating radiance.

Edgar and Detective Brown lean forward and closely inspect the smashed torso. Purple light shines in their eyes.

The lanky fellow picks up poultry shears and cuts into the body. Purple light spills everywhere.

Inscrutably, Strommelson watches this vivisection. The robotic fellow takes three backwards steps toward the door.

DETECTIVE BROWN

Anybody have tweezers or pliers?

COOK

Got some for de-boning.

The Cook hands Detective Brown a pair of needle-nosed pliers. Leaning over, the senior cop pokes this tool into the opening, tightens his grip, twists his hand, and extracts a luminous purple egg from the chest of the puppet. Dozens of small metal threads connect this pulsating organ to the crushed body.

DETECTIVE BROWN

This looks like its hardware--or engine--but what switched it on?

EDGAR

I'm pretty sure mine woke up when it got near Postville--I heard noises in the trunk when I got off the interstate, so probably something local.

DETECTIVE BROWN

Like what?

Strommelson snatches a pistol from Officer Sanchez and raises the muzzle, which BOOMS. Police brains SMACK the wall. The Hispanic officer falls as the Swede shoots Patrolman Little in the face, BANG, BANG. His pierced head SLAMS against the doorjamb, and his gun CLATTERS on the ground.

Scrambling Guests SCREAM. Edgar shoves Ashley, Markowitz, and Nagisa behind the counter. Heinrich Wagner prostrates himself alongside a refrigerator.

Strommelson aims at Detective Brown, who is drawing his pistol from his holster. The Swede fires, BANG, BANG, BANG.

A bullet slices the senior cop's left ear in half, and a second shot CRACKS his shoulder. The third round CLANKS on the stove hood, ricochets, and SMACKS the Cook in the leg.

Bleeding, Detective Brown THUDS against the wall and raises his gun. Innocent Guests stand in the way of his shot, though do not stop Strommelson, who mercilessly fires, BANG, BANG.

The Old Woman takes a round in the face, and one inch from the senior cop, a bullet SMACKS the wall.

Cuddly Bear lunges for Strommelson, who pans his gun. The muzzle flashes, BANG, BANG. Tiles SHATTER, and blood erupts from big bartender's right shoulder as he THUDS on the floor.

Losing consciousness, Detective Brown finds an opening and fires, BOOM. The shot CRACKS the right cheek bone of Strommelson, who remains upright and unaffected. Gun raised, the Swede robotically strides toward hidden Guests.

People SCREAM. Prone behind a fridge, Heinrich Wagner watches Strommelson advance. The bespectacled German then notices the anomalous lump that is on the back of the Swede's neck.

Suppressing fears, Heinrich Wagner rises to his feet, runs forward, and tackles Strommelson. The toppled Swede FLOPS face first onto the tile. Tenaciously, the small German clings to his foe's back.

With both hands, Heinrich Wagner yanks down Strommelson's collar. Attached to the Swede's nape is a six-inch tall WOODEN BABY in diapers. Only the puppet's back is visible.

In the brief quiet, Edgar peers from behind the counter. His eyes widen.

EDGAR

Look out!

Prostrated, Strommelson aims his semiautomatic at Heinrich Wagner. Cuddly Bear heaves himself forward and grabs the weapon, which is now pointing directly at his face.

CUDDLY BEAR

Biscuits.

Strommelson pulls the trigger, which CLICKS.

EDGAR

Get that baby!

Heinrich Wagner grabs the Wooden Baby and pulls. Flesh SQUEAKS as the puppet's hands are withdrawn from the nape of the Swedish automaton. Clenched in the toy's articulated fingers are spinal nerves.

Nauseated, the bespectacled German turns the Wooden Baby over. The infant has slick black hair that is parted neatly on one side and a little square mustache below its nose.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
It's Junior Fürher!

JUNIOR FÜRHER wriggles out of Heinrich Wagner's hands, CLATTERS on the floor, and crawls toward the doorway. Scrambling, Edgar takes the gun from the unconscious detective and runs forward, followed by Ashley.

ASHLEY
Ever shoot a gun before?

EDGAR
A BB gun.

The tomboy takes the weapon from the lanky fellow, squints, aims, exhales, and squeezes the trigger, BOOM. The shot CRACKS wooden diapers. Junior Fürher SKIDS across the tiles and SMACKS its wooden head against the wall.

MARKOWITZ
Kill that fucking baby!

Ashley aims, exhales, and fires, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM, BOOM. Wood CRACKS, and splinters fly as bullets chop through the puppet's limbs and neck. Junior Fürher's head falls off, and its body goes still.

Echoes of the gunshots fade, and the brief silence that follows is replaced by the sounds of Guests CRYING and MOANING. Edgar kisses Ashley on the lips, turns around, and eyes Detective Brown, the Cook, and Cuddly Bear.

EDGAR
Are there any doctors here?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)
Coming...

The slim and tall DR. SINGH enters the kitchen. Her eyes coolly survey the damage, and she shakes her head.

DR. SINGH
Unbelievable.

EDGAR
Prioritize the asshole--he got hit twice and is unconscious.

Dr. Singh walks toward Detective Brown, and nearby, Cuddly Bear grips his gunshot shoulder and SLUMPS against a wall.

Markowitz inspects the head of Junior Fürher. A ray of purple light shines from its cracked right eye. The shop owner looks at the lanky fellow, the tomboy, and the blond Asian who are currently approaching.

MARKOWITZ

I think Junior Fürher's hardware--
or engine--or whatever--is in his
head.

ASHLEY

Makes sense--he stopped moving when
I shot it off.

Nodding, Markowitz raises his sneaker over the visage of the
baby dictator and STOMPS. Wood CRACKS, and splinters fly.
Lying in the debris is a pulsating purple egg.

EDGAR

So we know how to kill two
different types.

ASHLEY

How many kinds are there?

EDGAR

Ten.

CUDDLY BEAR

Biscuits.

INT. PARKING LOT / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

The storm RUMBLES and HISSES. Walking through the parking lot
is the Redneck. His shirt is tattered and bloody, and
JINGLING keys dangle from his right hand. Upon the back of
his neck sits another Junior Fürher. The wooden baby has its
little hands buried deep inside of the man's spinal column.

Robotically, the Redneck strides towards an orange passenger
van. Not far behind him are a HEADLESS PINHEAD, a flying
Autogiro and two rolling Mechanikers. Thunder RUMBLES as
other small, dark FIGURES emerge from underneath parked
automobiles and join the procession.

INT. KITCHEN / THE LOUNGE / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Something CLANKS in the kitchen and startles the Guests.
Edgar, Ashley, Markowitz, and Nagisa look around the room, as
do Cuddly Bear, Betsy, and Heinrich Wagner, who has retrieved
Patrolman Little's semiautomatic.

Again, something CLANKS. A loud metallic GROAN follows. The
Guests look toward the ceiling, behind which something CREAKS
and SNAPS. Wide eyes go to the chimney-like stainless steel
hood that hangs over the stove. CRACKLING debris falls.

From this dark opening drops a Pinhead, who THUDS on the
grille. A Mechaniker CLANKS upon a nearby burner. Frightened
Guests scramble from the kitchen.

Thirty feet from the stove, Ashley aims her gun at the
puppets as does Heinrich Wagner.

Muzzles flash, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG, BANG. Bullets CLANK against the hanging pots (which swing in circles) and one SMACKS Mechaniker, who flies backwards and SMACKS the wall.

Both puppets leap upwards and retreat into the steel hood.

EDGAR

A Pinhead and a Mechaniker.

The Blond Waitress helps Cuddly Bear from the kitchen, while Dr. Singh and the bereaved tour guide Carol Doreski carry Detective Brown toward the lobby.

More CLANKS sound inside of the steel hood. An idea occurs to Edgar, who then looks at Ashley.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Get my back.

ASHLEY

What're you-

The lanky fellow races across the kitchen to the stove. There, he rapidly turns knobs. Flames WHOOSH as he ignites burner after burner.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(to Heinrich Wagner)

Don't shoot unless I do.

HEINRICH WAGNER

Ja.

Something CLANKS. Turning the last knob, Edgar looks up. Perched inside the hood and illuminated by firelight are EIGHT PUPPETS. Little eyes and metal weapons gleam. A Torch raises its left arm.

Edgar lunges sideways as flames WHOOSH out of the hood. His shoulder SLAMS into a fridge, and soon, he rights himself and runs toward the door.

EDGAR

Get outta here! There're a bunch more coming in!

Heinrich Wagner flees from the kitchen, but Ashley keeps her gun raised and waits for Edgar. WHIRRING, two Autogiros with blinking red eyes fly out of the steel hood. Dangling from the one on the left is Blackened Blade and hanging from the one on the right is a GRASHÜPFER, an eight-inch puppet that has a grasshopper head and legs, a dark green tuxedo, and four insectile arms that have sharp pincers.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Go, go, go!

Edgar reaches Ashley, who aims at a flying puppet, exhales, and squeezes. Her muzzle flashes, BANG.

A bullet SMACKS the WHIRRING Autogiro and knocks it and the Grashüpfer that it holds back into the ROARING burners.

CAROL DORESKEI (O.S.)
Get outta there so we can seal it
off. Now!

The other WHIRRING Autogiro sinks below the counter. Hidden from the shooter, Blackened Blade reaches out and turns the stove knobs counterclockwise. Burner flames diminish as Edgar and Ashley escape from the kitchen.

INT. THE LOUNGE / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

The couple from Portland runs into The Lounge, where Carol Doeski & Betsy, Markowitz & Nagisa, Howie & the Blond Waitress, and various Guests carry furniture toward the door.

COOK
That door's bisexual.

Bearing a sofa, the tour guide and the crewcut biker look at the Cook.

COOK (CONT'D)
It goes both ways.

The Cook smiles as somebody GROANS. Frowning, the women heave the couch, which THUDS in front of the door.

CAROL DORESKEI
We need to block off the entire-

The door window brightens and SHATTERS. Through this opening flies a fireball, which is the burning Grashüpfer.

The assistant manager Howie hurls a chair at the puppet. Grashüpfer leaps away, and the flung object SMACKS the floor.

Heinrich Wagner aims his gun at the fiery jumper, follows its trajectory with the muzzle of his weapon, and points toward a bunch of Guests.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
Don't!

Former police officer Carol Doeski snatches the gun from the hands of Heinrich Wagner. Grashüpfer lands on a table, and YELPING Guests scramble away. Napkins burst aflame.

Teeth gritted in pain, Cuddly Bear SLAMS a twenty-four pack of beer on top of Grashüpfer. Things CRUNCH.

Something CLANKS within the kitchen, and both Ashley and Carol Doeski point their weapons at the door.

CAROL DORESKEI (CONT'D)
Keep sealing off the kitchen.

HEINRICH WAGNER

Can I have my gun back?

CAROL DORESKEI

Nein.

Guests stack furniture in front of the door. Shadows darken the broken window, and Ashley prepares to fire. A BOOMING EXPLOSION shakes the entire building.

Fearfully, the Guests turn around and look through the lounge entryway. A wrecked orange passenger van now sits in the middle of the lobby. Its headlights glare across billowing smoke and falling debris.

Edgar, Ashley, Markowitz, Nagisa, Carol Doeski, Heinrich Wagner, Betsy, Howie, Cuddly Bear, Dr. Singh, the Cook, and various Guests stare in dismay at the destroyed lobby into which the storm now HISSES and ROARS.

EDGAR

Howie.

Startled, the petite assistant manager looks over.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

The keys to the rooms still work,
right?

Confusion shows upon Howie's face.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

With the power being out?

HOWIE

Yes, they do. The locks are battery
powered.

The lanky fellow takes the hand of the tomboy that does not contain a gun and eyes his close friend, the shop owner.

EDGAR

We need to hide somewhere else.

Ashley, Markowitz, and Nagisa follow Edgar across The Lounge. Carol Doeski agrees and nods her head.

CAROL DORESKEI

He's right. Everyone should go to a
room or an office--seal it up 'til
help comes--cause what happened in
that parking lot is about to happen
in here.

Frightened Guests exchange glances. The twenty-four pack SLAMS on the ground, knocked off of the table by the crushed Grashüpfer. Irritated, Cuddly Bear once again SMASHES the puppet with the heavy box of beer.

CUDDLY BEAR
Stay down, nigga.

INT. LOBBY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Van headlights glare in the eyes of Edgar, Ashley, Markowitz, and Nagisa as they enter the smoky lobby. COUGHING, the lanky fellow leads the small group to the nearby stairwell, which is beside the elevators. Unseen things CRACKLE and CLICK.

Edgar flings the door, and Ashley aims her gun into the dark enclosure. The four of them hold their breaths and listen. No sounds come from the stairwell.

The lanky fellow plunges inside, flanked by the tomboy. Behind the couple stride the blond Asian and the shop owner. The door shuts, and eight small dark FIGURES leap out of the smashed van.

INT. MAIN STAIRWELL / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Edgar, Ashley, Nagisa, and Markowitz ascend the stairwell. Although they try to move quietly, their BREATHS and FOOTFALLS echo loudly throughout the confined space. The lanky fellow sees something sparkle up ahead, and the tomboy who flanks him raises her gun.

Quietly creeping, the couple reaches the second floor landing. The door window glimmers with orange, red, and yellow firelight.

Edgar continues across the platform with Ashley and up the next set of stairs. Following them are Nagisa and Markowitz.

Something CRACKS and echoes from a lower floor. The shop owner looks back, but sees nothing in the darkness.

Edgar and Ashley reach the next landing, where they wait for Nagisa and Markowitz, both of whom soon arrive. At present, the lanky fellow looks through the narrow door window. The passage that lies beyond is silent and very dark.

EDGAR
(whispered)
Wait here.

ASHLEY
(whispered)
I'm armed, I should-

EDGAR
(whispered)
No. I'm going first.

The tomboy offers the gun to the lanky fellow, who shakes his head, mouths the words, 'Get my back,' turns around, opens the door, and walks through.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Edgar creeps into the third floor hallway, which is thick with darkness. He withdraws his cell phone, dials on the flashlight, and aims the beam forward.

The white eyes of charred corpses and cut-off heads stare up at him from the ground. The lanky fellow pales. Swallowing spit, he scans the area. Nothing appears to be moving.

Edgar hastens up the passage, steps over the blackened body of a child, circumvents a leg, and reaches the door to room 336. There, he slots and withdraws the key card.

Nothing happens. The lanky fellow's stomach sinks, and a groggy woman MOANS inside of one of the other rooms.

Perspiring, Edgar steadies his hand and slots the card a second time. A green light flashes, and the lock CLACKS.

GROGGY WOMAN (O.S.)
Is somebody there...?

The lanky fellow looks up the hallway at the dark, open room from which came this inquiry. With misgivings, he ignores the unknown woman, opens the door of 336, and looks inside. The place appears to be undisturbed.

Edgar motions for the trio to join him. Ashley, Nagisa, and Markowitz enter the passage and hasten forward. The blond Asian steps on a cold hand and YELPS.

GROGGY WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hello...?

Edgar puts a finger to his mouth, shakes his head, and motions at room 336, which Ashley, Nagisa, and Markowitz then enter. At present, the lanky fellow follows the trio inside.

INT. ROOM 336 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Ashley draws the curtain across the window. Nagisa and Markowitz turn on their phone lights as Edgar SNAPS the lock.

GROGGY WOMAN (O.S.)
I'm in 343... Please...

The group searches the bureau, the bathroom, trash cans, the closet, under the bed, and behind the desk, but do not come upon any puppets. Quietly, the lanky fellow and the shop owner lean a couch against the locked door.

GROGGY WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Can somebody help me...?

Edgar and Ashley land on the edge of the bed while Markowitz and Nagisa sit in two plush chairs.

NAGISA
Shouldn't we help her?

The couple exchanges an uncomfortable glance with the shop owner, who then takes the blond Asian's hand and squeezes.

MARKOWITZ
Going out there isn't a good idea.

NAGISA
You're just gonna let her die?

The question hangs in the air like a bad smell. Nobody wants to respond. Again, the Groggy Woman GROANS.

EDGAR
There're a lot of dead people in
this hotel...and right outside that
door. If we let the puppets know
we're here...
(he shakes his head)
That could be it for us.

The Groggy Woman MOANS and COUGHS. Tears sparkle in Nagisa's eyes, and she withdraws her hand from Markowitz.

No more sounds come from the hall, and an ugly silence fills room 336. Ashley wipes her face as Edgar clears his throat.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
I'm gonna call the police
departments in Mountainview and
Whitecrest, update them on the
situation.

The lank fellow unlocks his cell phone and dials '911.'
STATIC CRACKLES on the device, startling everyone.

Frantically, Edgar thumbs the cell phone volume down all the way. The STATIC vanishes.

An image flashes upon the screen of a NAKED MAN, who is bloody and shaking and hiding in the corner of a bathroom. A flamethrower appears in the bottom corner of the image. The nozzle of the weapon is aimed at the exposed phallus of the Naked Man.

Grimacing, Edgar squeezes the power button of his cell phone.

Upon the screen, blue flames race from the flamethrower nozzle toward the Naked Man's genitals. The cell phone turns black an instant before the fiery sterilization occurs. The power is off.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
Christ.

ASHLEY
 You think that's a signal from
 whatever's controlling these
 things?

Ruminating, Edgar nods his head.

EDGAR
 Possibly, though-

GROGGY WOMAN (O.S.)
 Sh'ma...Yis'ra'eil...

Markowitz raises his head and looks at the barricaded door.

GROGGY WOMAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 A-A-Adonai...El-El-

A WHEEZING COUGH echoes in the hallway. The lanky fellow and
 the tomboy watch the shop owner, who is nauseated.

NAGISA
 What language is that?

MARKOWITZ
 Hebrew. She's saying the Sh'ma--the
 prayer Jews say before they die.

Markowitz shakes his head and clenches his fists. Edgar and
 Ashley lower their gazes. Outside, the Groggy Woman COUGHS.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)
 Goddamn these fucks. These fucking
 Nazis.

GROGGY WOMAN (O.S.)
 Elohein-n-nu...Ad-Ad-Adonai...

Decided, the shop owner SNORTS, rises from his chair, and
 eyes the tomboy.

MARKOWITZ
 Let me have that gun.

EDGAR
 Markowitz. You can't go out th-

MARKOWITZ
 What I can't do is sit here and let
 this happen to Jews. Again.

NAGISA
 You changed your mind because she's
 Jewish?

MARKOWITZ
 Yep.

NAGISA
 Why?

MARKOWITZ

I've got about six million reasons.

Markowitz extends his hand to Ashley, who then looks worriedly at Edgar.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna fight you guys for it, but armed or unarmed, I'm going out there.

The lanky fellow gently takes the gun from the tomboy, kisses her on the mouth, stands up, and eyes the shop owner.

EDGAR

Let's go.

Ashley does not voice her obvious misgivings over this decision, but instead gestures at the firearm.

ASHLEY

The safety's on.

Edgar thumbs off the safety, which CLICKS, and Markowitz slowly undoes the lock, which SNAPS. The lanky fellow raises the semiautomatic as the shop owner opens the door.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Gun forward, Edgar strides into the dark hallway. Markowitz follows, shuts the door (which locks automatically), and flashes three fingers, four fingers, and then three fingers. Toward 343, the two friends cautiously proceed.

The open room sits ahead of them to left. Perspiring and afraid, the lanky fellow and the shop owner circumvent a corpse. Their quiet BREATHS and FOOTFALLS are nearly silent.

At present, Edgar and Markowitz reach the edge of the open room. The duo leans past the doorjamb and looks inside.

A screen saver dimly illuminates the interior and a bed, upon which lies the GROGGY WOMAN, a gaunt redhead of thirty. Her wrists and ankles have been bound with wire. Blood drips from above and SPLATS, SPLATS, SPLATS upon her still body.

Edgar and Markowitz look up and see that the entire ceiling is covered with gore. Something CHUGS like a train engine, and the two guys lower their gazes. Sitting upon the top right corner of the bed is a white and boxy MR. PUMPER. One of its three-fingered hands is attached to the Groggy Woman's neck, and blood fountains from the puppet's CHUGGING, spigot-like head as its accordion body lengthens and contracts.

Edgar sees that the Groggy Woman is dead, and suddenly, he understands that he is looking at the bait of a deadly trap. Furious, Markowitz lunges through the doorway at Mr. Pumper.

EDGAR

No!

The lanky fellow grabs the shop owner's arm and yanks him from the room. A Blade leaps from the bureau and misses its Semitic target by inches. Markowitz kicks the puppet as an excited, CHUGGING Mr. Pumper SQUIRTS blood at the ceiling.

Blade SMACKS against the far wall and lifts its head. Its eyes flash. One scalpel blade CLANKS into the jamb, and the other pierces Markowitz's right cheek.

GRUNTING, the shop owner withdraws from the room and shuts the door, which then automatically locks, CLICK.

Edgar motions to room 336, and Markowitz nods. A siren WAILS, startling both men, who then turn their heads. Amber, red, and white lights illuminate the window that is at the far end of the hall.

MARKOWITZ

(whispered)

Fire truck, right?

The lanky fellow nods, and together, the two guys traverse the hallway. Through the flashing window, Edgar and Markowitz look outside.

Siren WAILING, a neon green fire truck rolls up the street jumps the curb, and tears across the lawn. This vehicle POUNDS an Oregon white oak, which CRACKS, and the apparatus goes silent. Reflected headlights show that the inside of the truck's windshield is covered with blood.

Crestfallen, the two guys head back down the hallway.

INT. ROOM 336 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Edgar opens the door of 336, and his stomach sinks. The room is uninhabited. Fearful, he raises the gun. Something CREAKS in the closet, and the lanky fellow raises his gun.

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Wait. It's us in here.

Edgar relaxes and enters the room, followed by Markowitz. Two strong hands grab the shop owner's ankles and jerk. Markowitz SLAMS on the floor, where he blocks the entryway.

Gun upraised, Edgar spins around and sees a Pinhead in the passage. A Grashüpfer lands on the shop owner's back and hops upward. Pivoting, the lanky fellow fires at the moving target, BANG. This shot misses and CRACKS into the wall.

The tuxedoed puppet insect SMACKS Edgar's face and fastens itself there with its pincers. SHOUTING, the lanky fellow stumbles back.

Ashley scrambles from the closet as Markowitz rises to his knees. Pinhead POUNDS a hard fist into the shop owner's back. Ribs CRACK, and he FLOPS forward, YELLING.

GURGLING, Edgar SLAMS into the wall, drops his firearm, and reaches for Grashüpfer. The gun CLATTERS on the floor.

Ashley and Pinhead see the dropped weapon and lunge forward. Prostrated, the shop owner grabs the puppet's stubby legs. Pinhead trips and spills onto the floor.

Edgar RIPS Grashüpfer from his lacerated face, shoves it into the mini-fridge, and turns the appliance over so that it rests on its door.

Ashley grabs the firearm, presses the muzzle to Pinhead's skull, and fires, BANG. Plastic SHATTERS. The headless puppet stumbles back, raises its hands, and lunges forward.

Again, the tomboy fires, BANG. The shot CRACKS into Pinhead, who flies through the doorway and SMACKS against the passage wall. Purple light shines from the bullet hole in its chest.

Edgar and Ashley take Markowitz's wrists and drag him into the room. Teeth gritted, the shop owner bears the pain of his newly broken ribs.

The lanky fellow shoulders the door shut, SNAPS the bolt, feels his face, winces, and looks at his palm, which is covered with blood. Trapped inside of the mini-fridge, Grashüpfer THUMPS, CLICKS, and SCRAPES.

Nagisa shoves the sofa against the door as Ashley appraises Edgar, whose face is cut in eleven different places.

EDGAR

Hope you find scars sexy.

ASHLEY

Let me get something for that.

Winching, the shop owner sits upright, withdraws the scalpel blade from his right cheek, and shakes his head.

MARKOWITZ

It's about time I woke up from this dream.

EDGAR

All of us should.

In the open bathroom, Ashley runs hot water over a washcloth.

NAGISA

What about the woman?

MARKOWITZ

We were too late.

The tomboy wrings the cloth and reenters the room.

ASHLEY
We heard a fire truck.

EDGAR
Yeah...there was one...though the
firemen are no longer intact.

ASHLEY
Fuck.

NAGISA
What if the same thing happens to
the police when they get here? The
ones from the other towns?

EDGAR
That's why I need to call them.

ASHLEY
(to Nagisa)
Why don't you do that, okay?

Nagisa nods her head, picks up her cell phone, and dials 911.
Something SLAMS against the door.

MARKOWITZ
(to Edgar)
Do you really think they'll get
here in time?

Something CRACKS, and hunks of plaster fall from above.
Everybody looks up. A Tunneler dives from a hole in the
ceiling and SLAMS into Markowitz's right leg. The WHIRRING
drill bores deep. His femur CRACKS, and he YELLS.

Edgar runs toward Markowitz, grabs Tunneler's legs, yanks the
puppet loose, SLAMS it on the floor, and steps on its bald
head. Its drills spins, spraying gore 360 degrees, as the man
RIPS the body from the skull. The limbs go limp, and a purple
light shines within the bottom of its severed head.

Something SLAMS against the door. Edgar approaches Markowitz,
who YELLS as he tries to move his shredded leg.

Ashley sees a chunk of debris fall from ceiling and looks up.
Two small, tubular arms extend from the hole.

ASHLEY
Watch it!

Ashley raises her gun as fire WHOOSHES from the ceiling and
burns Edgar's back and Markowitz's face. Agonized, the lanky
fellow heaves the crippled shop owner behind a bureau.

The tomboy fires, BANG, BANG. The second shot CLANKS. One of
the Torches falls to the floor, and the other withdraws
further into ceiling. Nagisa covers the fallen puppet with a
metal trash can, which she then secures with a suitcase.

Something heavy POUNDS the door, which GROANS and buckles. Beside the bureau, the crippled, burnt, bleeding, and half-blind Markowitz looks at Edgar.

MARKOWITZ

You guys need to get out of here.

EDGAR

We're not g-

MARKOWITZ

I can't go anywhere. You have t-

A Blade drops from the ceiling and lands on Nagisa, who SCREAMS. Ashley SMACKS the puppet's skull with the butt of her gun. It flies through the air, WHACKS the television, and springs directly back at the tomboy. Tiny weapons gleam.

Ashley dodges to the left, and Blade reaches out, catches her collar with its hook, and swings behind her. Nagisa grabs the puppet and yanks. Unbalanced, the tomboy THUDS on the floor.

Blade rolls away from Ashley, rises, and looks at Nagisa. Edgar interposes himself and shields his face. Two scalpel blades pierce his upraised palms and elicit a GRUNT.

Edgar kicks his left foot at Blade, but the puppet dodges, leaps, hooks the man's thigh, and scrambles onto his back.

Markowitz sees a tubular arm emerge from the ceiling hole.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

Above you!

Nagisa throws a St. James Bible at the flamethrower. Fire WHOOSHES and incinerates the holy book.

Ashley rolls onto her back, raises her gun, and shoots, BANG. The bullet CLANKS and knocks the second Torch into darkness.

Blade unhooks itself from Edgar's shirt and leaps onto the bed. The lanky fellow plucks the scalpels from his hands, grabs the comforter, and jerks.

Tripped, the puppet sprawls forward. Edgar and Ashley roll up the blanket and imprison Blade in a big ball of fabric, which they shove into the bathtub and weigh down with water.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

Get out on that the balcony and climb down.

The lanky fellow, the tomboy, and the blond Asian look at the shop owner, who is dying. Something POUNDS on the door, and the agitated Grashüpfer RATTLES within the mini-fridge.

Markowitz lifts his burnt face and looks up at Edgar.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

Dedicate your next comic to me.

EDGAR

Okay.

MARKOWITZ

In memory of a great Jewish hero.

The garbage can that contains Torch glows with heat; the blanket-wrapped Blade RIPS fabric; Grashüpfer RATTLES; the door THUDS. Trembling, the shop owner extends a bloody hand, which the lanky fellow takes and shakes.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

Shalom, amigo.

EDGAR

Bye.

Jaw clenched, Edgar turns away, leads Ashley and Nagisa across the room, and opens the balcony door.

MARKOWITZ

Nagisa.

The blond Asian pauses at the threshold and looks back.

MARKOWITZ (CONT'D)

D-Do you think you would've slept with me? If...if I'd t-taken you out to some nice places and didn't s-s-say anything stupid?

NAGISA

Sixty percent chance.

MARKOWITZ

G-G-Good to know.

Pleased, Markowitz grins, leans against the wall, and bleeds.

EXT. BALCONY / ROOM 336 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Outside, the storm HISSES, and smoke rises. Nagisa draws the curtains shut and closes the glass door while Edgar and Ashley look over the railing. The balcony below is aflame.

ASHLEY

We need to jump into that pool.

The trio looks through the fire-illuminated smoke and rain at the pool that lies fifty feet below. It does not look big.

EDGAR

I saw something in there before.
Puppets, probably.

ASHLEY

It's our best option...unless you think we should go up...?

EDGAR

I don't.

Frightened, Nagisa stares down at the distant pool.

NAGISA

I don't know if I can-

Something BOOMS inside of the curtained room.

MARKOWITZ (O.S.)

I'm right here, you little Nazi
fucks! Right here!

Markowitz YELLS, and unseen things SMASH. Ashley grips a banister and clambers to the railing.

EDGAR

Ashley. Let me go f-

The tomboy dives into the air. A gust stirs the smoke, and the lanky fellow loses sight of the falling woman. His heart pounds, and he stops breathing as he waits for her to land. The rain HISSES.

A SPLASH echoes. Relieved, Edgar and Nagisa look down toward the swimming pool. Only smoke is visible.

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Come on down, it's-

Ashley SCREAMS. Horrified, Edgar climbs to the railing, bends his knees, and leaps out into the opaque cloud.

EDGAR

Coming down!

Smoke envelops the airborne man. Blindly falling, a thousand fears fill his mind.

EXT. PATIO & BACKYARD / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Edgar plummets from the smoke and SPLASHES into the pool. His sneakers THUD against the tiled bottom, and his knees buckle. Quickly, he launches himself to the surface and looks around.

Flames and the distant lights of the wrecked fire truck illuminate the patio. Ashley lunges out of the far end of the pool, FLOPS onto the concrete, and writhes. A small, dark FIGURE clutches her left arm.

EDGAR

Ashley! I'm-

Something ZIPS across the water. Edgar dives sideways, reaches out, and grabs his attacker, HAPPY AMPHIBIAN, a green puppet frog that wears a polka-dotted clown suit and white facial makeup. The thing opens its mouth, wherein lies a red tongue that is a harpoon.

Edgar tilts his head to the side as the WHISTLING projectile scrapes his chin. SUCKING, Happy Amphibian retracts its weaponized tongue into its mouth.

The lanky fellow hurls the plastic puppet high into the air and swims toward Ashley, who is still struggling with her own clown frog. Her left arm is dark with blood.

The thrown puppet reaches its zenith, plummets, and SHATTERS upon the concrete.

NAGISA (O.S.)
I'm coming down!

Swimming toward Ashley, Edgar looks over his shoulder. A dark silhouette appears in the smoke that is directly above the patio. The lanky fellow pales, and his stomach sinks.

Nagisa SMACKS the concrete, convulses once, and stops moving.

Grimacing, Edgar climbs from the water, scrambles to Ashley, grabs Happy Amphibian's clown shoes, and pulls. The puppet comes loose, excepting its tongue, which tugs the harpoon that is stuck in the tomboy's shoulder. Pained, the woman GRUNTS, leans forward, and bites the line, which SNAPS.

Edgar steps on Happy Amphibian, grabs its limbs in his fists, and pulls. Two arms and two legs RIP from the body, which then jitters pointlessly on the concrete.

Rain HISSES. The lanky fellow tosses aside the appendages, helps the tomboy to her feet, and looks at the six-inch harpoon that is sticking out of her left shoulder.

ASHLEY
Leave it for now.

EDGAR
Okay. Let's try the fire truck.

Pained, the bloodied couple from Portland hastens across the concrete. Ahead of them and attached to a diagonal Oregon white oak is the neon green fire truck.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
How many more bullets do you have?

ASHLEY
Two.

Thunder RUMBLES as Edgar and Ashley run across the lawn. The lanky fellow eyes the blood-covered windshield of the fire truck and removes his wet shirt.

Lightning CRACKS as the two reach the front of the vehicle, the engine of which is still RUMBLING. Ashley raises the gun as Edgar walks to the driver's door and looks through the window. Two headless firefighters sit within the gory cab.

The lanky fellow flings the door, and the driver's body tips sideways, slides out, and THUMPS on the lawn. Gun raised and dripping, the tomboy surveys the environs. Several small shapes move from the hotel toward the vehicle.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Hurry.

INT. FIRE TRUCK - SAME

Edgar climbs into the sticky, blood-soaked driver's seat, grimaces, discards two heads, leans over, opens the passenger's side, and shoves out the remaining corpse, which THUDS on the ground. Ashley climbs into the cab of the truck.

The couple shut their doors and RIP out the deployed airbags. Gripping the wet shirt, the lanky fellow wipes the gore from the inside of the windshield in order to see. Beyond the glass and a hundred feet away, four Grashüpfers spring across the lawn toward the vehicle, as do three Happy Amphibians. Two Pinheads soon join the group.

Edgar shifts into reverse and accelerates. The fire truck lurches backward, RUMBLING, and the tree SHUDDERS, but the stuck vehicle does not roll. Outside, the hopping and running puppets close the distance to seventy feet.

The lanky fellow shifts into drive and STOMPS the gas pedal. ROARING, the fire truck surges forward. Wood CRUNCHES, and the tree trunk SNAPS. Toppled, the huge white oak falls toward the approaching puppets. Thick branches SMACK Grashüpfers and Happy Amphibians, and the trunk CRUSHES one of the Pinheads.

Edgar shifts into reverse and STOMPS the gas pedal. Wheels SQUEAK as the fire truck rolls backwards.

EDGAR

I'd tell you to buckle up if you weren't harpooned.

The RUMBLING vehicle reverses toward the street, and Ashley looks at the receding hotel.

ASHLEY

Are we just gonna leave everyone back there...?

EDGAR

I've got an idea how we can help them.

Tires touch the asphalt and SCREECH. Edgar cuts the wheel, shifts into drive, and accelerates.

ASHLEY

What's your idea?

The lanky fellow fishes in his pocket and removes something that he then SLAPS on the dashboard. Stuck there is a soggy ticket from the Toulon Mansion Tour.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Toulon's Mansion?

EDGAR
My guess is that's what switches them on--gives them power, maybe even controls them. It's local and it's where they were made in the first place.

ASHLEY
I hope you're right.

EDGAR
And remember those nosebleeds and headaches that everybody got? Those weird sounds we heard--that shit on our phones?

ASHLEY
You think that was a signal?

EDGAR
I do.

Edgar dials the wheel counterclockwise and drives onto a cross street. Spinning lights turn the rain into amber, red, and white jewels. The truck crosses an intersection.

Something flickers on the right side of the road. The lanky fellow and the tomboy turn their heads. There stands a small house, which is on fire.

INT. LOBBY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Seventeen fresh corpses lie about the orange van that earlier crashed into the lobby. Something POUNDS and SNAPS.

INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

The bathroom door flies open. Three CHILDREN crawl through the far window as Carol Doeski makes a stand, raises an empty gun, and pistol-whips an onrushing Pinhead. A Blade scurries into the bathroom and launches two scalpels. Steel pierces the tour guide's eyes, and she YELLS.

INT. FRONT OFFICE / LOBBY / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Inside the small front office and illuminated by a storm lamp are nine people, including Howie, Betsy, and a weak, bandaged Detective Brown. Something POUNDS the door, which is barricaded with desks.

HOWIE
It's her they want. The lesbian.

The crewcut biker ignores this comment.

HOWIE (CONT'D)
Maybe we should-

DETECTIVE BROWN
Shut that mouth.

Thunder RUMBLES as the assistant manager frowns.

HOWIE
I picked the wrong group to-

Something POUNDS the door, and flickering firelight illuminates the edges of the jamb. Perspiration beads upon nine anxious faces as broom handles, box cutters, and other makeshift weapons are gathered...

INT. WALK-IN FRIDGE / THE LOUNGE / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Illuminated by candles, Heinrich Wagner, the Freckled Stoner, and five other Guests sit and shiver inside of a walk-in refrigerator. Dozens of clicking FOOTFALLS sound within the kitchen that lies beyond the thick metal door.

A MUSTACHED MAN SNEEZES. Guests glare at the noise maker.

FRECKLED STONER
Bless you.

Guests glare at the Freckled Stoner, who opens his mouth to apologize, but then stops himself from so doing. FOOTFALLS grow louder as the puppets approach the walk-in fridge...

INT. ROOM 115 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Cuddly Bear and the Blond Waitress sit in bed in a barricaded room. The injured bartender looks at his phone, which shows the lovely, but fearful face of LADY BEAR.

CUDDLY BEAR
Now don't get the sniffles. Your Cuddly Bear killed three of these niggas and can handle his self fine. Just do what I asked you to do 'til I get home.

LADY BEAR
Okay.
(she SNIFFLES)
I'll take a bubble bath.

CUDDLY BEAR
That'll give the Cuddly Bear something real nice to think about.

The woman on the screen nods her head and wipes her eyes.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)
I love you and'll see you soon.

LADY BEAR
I love you too. Be careful.

CUDDLY BEAR
I will. Now go get yourself effervescent.

LADY BEAR
I will.

CUDDLY BEAR
Bye Lady Bear.

LADY BEAR
Bye.

Cuddly Bear turns off his cell phone. His upbeat attitude falls away, and his eyes sparkle with sadness and fear. The big bartender rubs his face with a beefy paw and looks at the Blond Waitress, who stares numbly at the barricaded door.

CUDDLY BEAR
The Cuddly Bear's one hundred percent faithful--as you know--so I only mean this like a friend does-

Cuddly Bear winces, raises his left arm, and puts the bloody limb around the shoulders of the Blond Waitress. SNIFFLING, the woman leans her head against his chest.

BLOND WAITRESS
Thank y-

Something CRACKS, and debris falls from above. Cuddly Bear and the Blond Waitress scramble from the bed as three Tunnelers emerge from a hole in the ceiling, followed by a fourth puppet, MONEYLENDER, a fat, bald, hook-nosed Jewish caricature that has horns, a rat tail, and long yellow claws.

This last toy lands on the woman, who SCREAMS.

INT. FIRE TRUCK - SAME

Rain CRACKLES on the fire truck's windshield. In the cab, Edgar eyes Ashley, who grits her teeth, jerks the six-inch harpoon from her shoulder, and GRUNTS. The lanky fellow slows the truck for a turn, and dials the wheel.

EDGAR
Can I do anything?

The fire truck RUMBLES and shakes, and the tomboy winces.

ASHLEY
Avoid potholes.

EDGAR
I'll try.

Dense forest stands on either side of the road upon which Edgar drives. Ashley stabs the harpoon into the dashboard, grips her bleeding shoulder, and opens a medical kit.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
You're pretty impressive.
(he nods)
And resilient.

ASHLEY
You're doing very okay yourself.

EDGAR
For a comic book guy...

A thought occurs to the tomboy as she opens a packet of butterfly bandages with her bloody fingers.

ASHLEY
Hey...I've been meaning to say something to you for a while...to explain why I didn't read those comics you gave me--the ones you drew.

EDGAR
It's fine. Most people aren't into comics.

ASHLEY
I've read comics before--enjoyed some too--but when I looked at those...
(she shakes her head)
Lightning Girl's based on your ex-wife, isn't she?

EDGAR
Yeah. She even modelled for a few of them.

Windshield wipers SQUEAK while shoving aside rain.

ASHLEY
I'm not usually jealous...but I like you--a lot--and those drawings felt like love letters written to somebody else.

EDGAR
I didn't know it was that obvious.

ASHLEY

It was to me. So that's why I
didn't read them. I really wanted
to, but...

Ashley shakes her head and applies a bandage to her shoulder.
Wet branches SCRATCH the sides of the vehicle.

EDGAR

Well...you have nothing to be
jealous about. The truth is...I'm
falling in love you.

Surprised, the tomboy looks at the lanky fellow, who keeps
his eyes locked on the road ahead.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

The only reason I haven't said so
before is because I thought it
might freak you out.

Ashley leans over, kisses Edgar on the lips, and sits back.

ASHLEY

When I said 'I like you a lot,' it
was a euphemism.

EDGAR

I hypothesized. Unfortunately...
(he gestures to the left)
...we're here-

The lanky fellow corners onto a side street. Rain CRACKLES on
the spiked stone wall that circumscribe the twenty-acre lot
in which stands the three-story Toulon Mansion.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Now's the time for seat belts.

Winching, the tomboy pulls a belt across her chest and slots
the buckle, which SNAPS. The lanky fellow secures himself and
CLICKS on the brights. Falling rain glares. A dark FIGURE
scampers across the wall and drops from view.

Ashley raises her gun as Edgar dials the wheel. Bright
headlights illuminate the closed entrance gate.

The lanky fellow STOMPS the accelerator. ROARING, the truck
POUNDS the obstruction. Metal SQUEALS, and chains SNAP as the
gate flies open.

RUMBLING and SPLASHING, the vehicle barrels onto the Toulon
estate. Headlights glare across the empty parking lot, and
two small FIGURES scamper behind glistening foliage. Edgar
squeezes the wheel as he drives forward, dragging an amber,
red, and white rooster tail of water.

High beams and spinning lights shine upon the Toulon Mansion. A second floor window opens, and a small dark FIGURE leaps out and drops to the lawn, where it SPLASHES; a second FIGURE and a third then emerge and SPLASH upon the ground.

Edgar drives the RUMBLING fire truck directly at the mansion.

ASHLEY

Um...

The lanky fellow cuts the steering wheel. Tires SCREECH, and water sprays. Headlights illuminate two Grashüpfers and a Happy Amphibian, which are caught by surprise. Front, middle, and rear tires CRUSH, CRUNCH and FLATTEN these puppets.

Edgar dials the wheel in the opposite direction and again drives toward the mansion.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

There's a plan?

The fire truck WHACKS a Toulon Tour sign and SHATTERS the posts that uphold the overhang. Hurriedly, the lanky fellow dials the wheel to the right. Tires SCREECH.

EDGAR

There is.

ASHLEY

Is it 'demolition derby'?

The fire truck barrels clear as the overhang CREAKS, droops, and collapses.

EDGAR

The building in the back. Forgot what it's called.

Edgar drives past the mansion façade and dials the wheel counterclockwise. Headlights pan and illuminate the small stone building that stands in the backyard. Iron bars jut like antennas from the roof of this strange structure.

ASHLEY

The mausoleum.

EDGAR

That's the word.

Edgar adjusts the steering wheel and aims the nose of the truck directly at the mausoleum. Again, he STOMPS the gas.

Ashley SLAMS a fire safety helmet onto Edgar, dons one herself, and pulls down her chin strap. ROARING across mud, the truck speeds toward the mausoleum.

The sounds of CRACKLING STATIC and HUMMING iron rods fill the air. Headaches lance the skulls of the lanky fellow and the tomboy, and blood drips from their nostrils. Headlights glare upon stone and iron as the couple braces for impact...

INT. BATHROOM / ROOM 123 - SAME

The door of an invaded bathroom flies open. Dr. Singh and her husband MR. SINGH scramble backward. Two Pinheads bound into the room, grab throats, and SNAP necks.

INT. FRONT OFFICE / LOBBY / POSTVILLE LOUNGE - SAME

The door of the front office EXPLODES. Chunks of burning wood strike Betsy, Howie, Detective Brown, and other Guests. Torches, Blades, Moneylenders, Grashüpfers, and Junior Fürhers storm into the room...

INT. WALK-IN FRIDGE / THE LOUNGE / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

Heinrich Wagner, the Freckled Stoner, and five Guests scramble across the walk-in fridge as two Pinheads tear down the metal door. Ten Mechanikers roll forward.

HEINRICH WAGNER
(in German)
To redeem the name of the
Fatherland!

Selflessly, the bespectacled German throws himself at the puppets. Sharp multipurpose rise to meet the airborne man...

INT. ROOM 115 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

A clawed Moneylender RIPS out the throat of the Blond Waitress, who is GURGLING on the floor. A Tunneler drills into the right thigh of Cuddly Bear, and a second one lunges at his face...

EXT. BACKYARD / TOULON MANSION - SAME

The neon green fire truck CRASHES into the mausoleum. Headlights BURST, and stones SHATTER. Dislodged iron poles spin into the sky as do radiant purple gems.

INT. FIRE TRUCK - SAME

Edgar and Ashley jerk forward. Seatbelts SNAP taut. The lanky fellow's helmet flies off and SHATTERS the windshield as the gun CLATTERS in the foot well. Outside, spinning iron bars fall from the sky and SPLATTER mud. The STATIC and HUMMING NOISES abruptly stop.

INT. FRONT OFFICE / LOBBY / POSTVILLE LOUNGE - SAME

In the office, a Blade thrusts its knife at the right eye of Betsy, pauses, and collapses. A Pinhead releases the throat of the purple-faced Detective Brown and falls over. Lifeless, a Grashüpfer drops off of Howie's mangled face.

INT. WALK-IN FRIDGE / THE LOUNGE / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

In the walk-in fridge, Mechanikers withdraw their tools from the dead body Heinrich Wagner, roll one inch, and tip over.

INT. ROOM 115 / POSTVILLE LODGE - SAME

In room 115, a WHIRRING drill pokes Cuddly Bear's nose and stops spinning. Gripped in the bartender's beefy paws is the limp form of a Tunneler.

CUDDLY BEAR
Looks like the nigga's outta juice.

The Moneylender and the other puppets drop lifelessly to the floor. Cuddly Bear looks at the dead Blond Waitress, SNORTS angrily, and rips off Tunneler's head.

CUDDLY BEAR (CONT'D)
Bitch ass puppets.

INT. FIRE TRUCK - SAME

Two more falling iron bars SPLATTER mud. In the truck, Edgar raises his head and eyes Ashley, who squeezes her hurt shoulder with her right hand and discards her fire helmet.

EDGAR
You okay?

ASHLEY
Sort of almost.

The lanky fellow looks through the smashed windshield. Amber, red, and white lights spin in circles atop the truck.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Do you think it worked?

Edgar looks at the rubble pile that was once the mausoleum, raises his gaze, and surveys the area.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
I see one! No, two-

Ashley motions to her sideview mirror, and Edgar leans over to get a better view. Spinning lights race across the mud and illuminate a Blade and a Junior Fürher. Neither of the prostrated puppets are moving.

Relief fills the lanky fellow and the tomboy.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
Not bad for a comic book g-

Something CRACKS, and rubble RATTLES. Ashley unbuckles her seatbelt and leans over to retrieve the semiautomatic from the foot well while Edgar looks out through the broken windshield. Something JINGLES, and garners his attention. From the far side of the rubble pile climbs a dark SHAPE.

The lanky fellow points at this figure as the tomboy sits upright and raises her gun. Amber, red, and white lights spin and illuminate a fungus-covered SKELETON. JINGLING steel rings have replaced all of its decayed joints and hold the thing together like a human-sized marionette.

Steadying the gun, Ashley fires through amber rain, BANG. The bullet CRACKS the Skeleton's clavicle. Metal rings JINGLE, and the figure is knocked out into the storm. Mud SPLATTERS.

EDGAR

I think that's Andre Toulon.

Amber, red, and white lights spin. The couple from Portland look for the marionette skeleton, but cannot see anything.

Edgar twists the ignition, but the dead engine only CHITTERS.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

It's done.

Somewhere in the dark storm, metal rings JINGLE. Edgar grabs a crowbar and unbuckles his seatbelt while Ashley looks around with her gun upraised.

Amber, red, and white rain HISSES as the lanky fellow and the tomboy try to locate the marionette skeleton. Metal JINGLES.

Ashley swivels her gun as two bony hands reach for her face. Edgar swings the crowbar and SHATTERS Andre Toulon's cranium. Bright purple light spills from the smashed brainpan, and the couple squints. JINGLING, the skeleton clasps its bashed skull and stumbles backward.

Ashley aims and fires, BANG. The shot SMACKS Andre Toulon's sternum and throws him into the storm. Metal JINGLES, and mud SPLATTERS. The tomboy squeezes the trigger again, and the emptied gun CLICKS.

The storm HISSES. Edgar and Ashley huddle close together and watch their surroundings. More than a hundred feet away, a purple light rises from the mud. Metal JINGLES as the puppet master Andre Toulon hastens through the rainy night toward the woods.

Watching this diminishing mote of purple light, the couple from Portland finally starts to relax. Amidst the sounds of HISSING rain and RUMBLING thunder come those of distant police SIRENS.

EXT. WOODS SURROUNDING THE TOULON MANSION - SAME

Kneeling on wet earth, Andre Toulon covers his radiant, purple brain with mud so that it is no longer visible in the darkness. With his skeletal hands, he digs into the soil of an overgrown garden and unearths a metal briefcase. Latches CLICK as he opens this long-buried, waterproof container. Inside lies a pistol from World War II--a Luger.

INT. FIRE TRUCK - SAME

Amber, red, and white rain HISSES around the cab of the fire truck, and police sirens WAIL in the distance. Edgar gently puts his arm around Ashley as he ponders the bizarre events.

EDGAR

I get that the mausoleum helped
Toulon control his puppets...but
what I'm wondering now--after
seeing that purple light in his
skull--is if somebody else is
controlling him...?

ASHLEY

Like who?

EDGAR

I don't know. Some kind of
ghost...or demon...?
(he shakes his head)
Maybe the Devil?

The couple from Portland watches the storm as police sirens WAIL. In the distance, something flashes and CRACKS twice. A bullet WHISTLES through the truck's cab, and a second one lances Ashley's right eye. Her head SMACKS the back of the bench, and blood gouts from the wound.

Shocked, Edgar gapes at Ashley.

ASHLEY

Get...down...

The tomboy pulls the lanky fellow below the dashboard as more CRACKING gunshots echo in the distance. Three bullets WHISTLE through the cab and puncture the driver's seat.

Edgar puts his hands to Ashley's pierced face and tries to stop the flow of blood, but the dying woman is beyond help. Horrified, the lanky fellow grips the pale, shivering tomboy to his chest. Rain HISSES and SIRENS grow louder.

Fade to black.

Titlecard: A Year and a Half Later...

INT. FISTICUFFS COMICS - AFTERNOON

Twenty COMIC BOOK FANS stand in line inside of Fisticuffs Comics, the walls of which have numerous posters for 'New Lightning Girl,' a buxom, short-haired, and tomboyish superheroine who strongly resembles Ashley Summers. Sitting at the counter and signing the cover of an issue is the lanky creator, Edgar Easton. A beard adorns his gaunt face, and he looks as if he has not slept well in a very long time. The lanky fellow returns the comic to a CHUBBY KID.

EDGAR

There you go.

CHUBBY KID

Thanks man. It's an awesome comic.

EDGAR

Glad you like it.

Grinning, the youth departs. An AWKWARD TEEN steps to the counter and sets down five copies.

EDGAR (CONT'D)

Hi there.

AWKWARD TEEN

Hi. I wanted to tell you that I think the New Lightning Girl's even better than the first one.

EDGAR

Thanks. And I agree with you.

Edgar starts signing the comic books.

AWKWARD TEEN

And man--this issue's really messed up. Lots of terrible shit happens to people who don't deserve it.

EDGAR

Yeah...

(he nods his head)

I try to mirror reality in my work.

The lanky fellow signs the covers of the two remaining issues and slides them across the counter.

AWKWARD TEEN

Are you gonna do some more?

EDGAR

Probably. I don't think things've been fully resolved.

Edgar remembers the terrible night in Postville...

EXT. BACKYARD / TOULON MANSION - SAME

Rain CRACKLES in the mud outside of the fire truck in which Edgar grips Ashley to his chest. The woman is dead. Police sirens WAIL, louder and louder, as the lanky fellow grabs the crowbar, steps outside, and looks around.

Edgar sees something. Ten acres away, at the far edge of the Toulon estate, a purple light flickers once and disappears into the dark woods. Thunder RUMBLES, and metal rings JINGLE.

Cut to black.

The end.